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SERMON PLANS

ON THE

SUNDAY EPISTLES

BY THE

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WITHDRAWN

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OF

HOMILETICAL SERMON SKETCHES ON THE SUNDAY EPISTLES.

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PREFACE.

THE following Sermon Sketches were drawn up in consequence of a number of requests that reached the Editors of *Pastoralia*, asking them to give their readers a series of sermonettes on the Sunday Epistles. The Editors being unable to undertake the work, and being moreover pressed for space in the pages of *Pastoralia*, suggested that the work could be more fittingly undertaken by a small separate committee. It was also most kindly suggested by one, who from the first took an exceedingly deep and practical interest in the work of the Committee, that seeing the Epistles were so little known and understood by many Catholics, the work of throwing each Sunday Epistle as it stands, into a complete Sermon, would be an exceedingly useful and interesting, though possibly a very difficult task. Encouraged by this suggestion, the writers have endeavoured to attempt it, so that most of the Sermons will be found to have been cast in the *homiletical* form, while at the same time an effort was always made to render all the parts of each sermon subordinate to one leading idea. They leave it to their readers to judge of the measure of their success.

Τῇ μητρι Χαριστῃ.

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Homiletical Sermon Sketches

ON THE

Sunday Epistles

Sunday within the Octave of Christmas

THE HERITAGE OF SONSHIP

"And if a son, an heir through God."—(Gal. iv. 7).

We are now the sons of God through the Incarnation of Our Lord. For long years men had lived under the heritage of fear, expecting the coming of the Redeemer, Who would put an end to their servitude. Thus at Christmastide we celebrate two great graces flowing from the birth of our Lord, namely the sonship of adoption and the correlative right to call upon God as our Father.

I. *The Sonship of Adoption.*

1. Our Lord has taken upon Himself our human nature, raising it into the most intimate union with His divine Nature.

2. His human nature has shared in H eternal Sonship, and so we His brethr in the flesh have become adopted sons God.

3. Before His coming, though intended God for this high dignity, we were pra tically nothing more than slaves or servan "*serving under the elements of the world.*"

II. *The loving Fatherhood of God.*

1. God had previously appeared to t eyes of men as their Lord; a severe a stern task-master, often punishing swif and rigorously.

2. But now our Lord speaking in His hum nature bids us use, what otherwise we shou never have dared to use—the loving na of Father. "Our Father Who art heaven."

Looking down upon the world and the Fa of His Christ, God is now appeased; His wra is turned aside, and He sends the Spirit of H Son into our hearts, crying Abba, Father.

This is what the sweet and loving apparitio of our Lord in the crib means for us, and so wh this feast runs its gladsome course our hea ought to swell with love and gratitude, and c

voices ought to rise in unison, thanking our Lord who came in hunger, and cold and poverty, that we might be made rich in the things of God. "For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that being rich, He became poor for your sakes, that through His poverty you might be rich." (II. Cor. viii. 9).

First Sunday after the Epiphany

OUR REASONABLE SERVICE

"I beseech you, therefore, brethren, by the mercy of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, pleasing unto God, your reasonable service."—(Rom. xii. 1).

The Apostle writes to his Roman converts in earnest and beseeching words, adjuring them by the loving mercy of God, which has descended in its plenitude upon them, that they give unto God their *reasonable service.*

I. He defines in what that *reasonable service* consists :—the definition demands our closest attention.

1. Our service being a *reasonable* one, he asks for nothing more than what is according to the dictates of *reason.*

2. Our reason admits that " man was created for this one end, to praise the Lord His God, to show Him reverence, to *serve* Him, and thus to save his soul." (St. Ignatius).

3. The Apostle inspired by the Holy Ghost simply sets before us *how* this service is

to be rendered. Our service then is "to present our bodies a *living sacrifice*, holy, pleasing unto God," seeing that God has a right to the service of the bodies He has given us. A *sacrifice* and so painful: *living*, continuous, enduring as long as life lasts.

Our bodies being of the earth, earthy, tend towards low and gross objects. To deny them the pleasures to which they are naturally inclined is to inflict on them the sufferings of a sacrifice. So we have to *crucify* the flesh, to *mortify* the senses; both these ideas imply *sacrifice*. However hard this may seem it is *reasonable*, the mind approves of it. Even the philosophers of old recognised that all yielding to our passions was contrary to right reason and unworthy of rational beings.

II. The Apostle then goes on to enlarge on this *reasonable service*.

i. "*And be not conformed to this world.*"

1. History and experience set before our reason the fact that the world has always been God's enemy.

2. The history of the world is practically little more than a chronicle of the world's sins.

3. Wherever we look, we see its opposition to God; its ways are not God's ways—its maxims are opposed to His—its injustice opposes His Justice—its cruelty, His Mercy—its falseness, His Truth—its wickedness, His Goodness.

ii. "*But be reformed in the newness of your mind,*" that you may understand and follow and experience, "*what is the good and the acceptable and the perfect will of God.*"

iii. "*Be wise unto sobriety.*" Be wise, but let humility accompany your wisdom; be wise indeed, but all in judgment, remembering that you are only *one,* and that there are *many other members* to whom is imparted a share of the measure of faith, to some more, to others less.

Thus with bodies undefiled, with lives uncontaminated by the world, with ready will and wise discretion, we make ourselves worthy to be united in the mystical body of Christ, giving forth praise, and worship and glory to God.

Second Sunday after the Epiphany

THE APOSTOLIC CHRISTIAN

"Hating that which is evil, cleaving to that which is good."—(Rom. xii. 9).

The Epistle of to-day is the continuation of that of last Sunday. In it, St. Paul continues his instructions to his Roman converts.

I. God does not repeat Himself either in the natural or supernatural order.

1. No two persons are exactly alike, God having given to each one his *individuality*.

2. So also His spiritual gifts are bestowed in number degree and kind in such manner that no two souls possess either the same graces or vocation.

3. Hence every man coming into this world has a special work or vocation given him; if he perform it not it will remain undone.

II. Each one then must labour with the special gifts God has given him, thus only can he attain the perfection that God has marked out for him.

1. If he be given the grace of preaching,

God means it to be used according to the rule of faith.

2. If it be the administration of holy things, let him minister faithfully in that office.

3. Teachers will have to account for their doctrine.

4. Those in authority whose duty it is to exhort, must be instant in exhorting, ready with the word in season and out of season.

5. Benefactors must distribute their gifts with a pure intention for the glory of God.

6. Rulers must use care: the merciful dispense their mercies in kindly cheerful fashion.

In fine, each one is to labour at the duties of his state of life: it matters not *what* those duties are, provided they be carried out faithfully and with a good intention, "not minding high things, but consenting to the humble."

III. But over and above the bare duties of our state of life, comes the great commandment of the perfect love of God, and the love of our

neighbour for God's sake. Let the Christian's love, both of His Maker and of his fellow-men, be

1. *Sincere,* "without dissimulation": *persevering,* "never relaxing our care": a love of fervent aspiration shown in constant service of God.

2. Our charity to be founded on the other supernatural virtues: so "rejoicing in *hope,*" our hope being manifested by patience in tribulation, and perseverance in prayer.

3. Love of our neighbour to be supernatural, founded on the motive of our incorporation in the mystical body of Christ. This shown by:—

(a) *Humility*: anticipating others in showing honour and marks of respect.

(b) *Works of mercy*: helping our poorer brethren in their necessities, and in being hospitable one towards another.

(c) *Forgiveness of injuries*: "bless them that persecute you, bless and curse not."

(d) *Ready sympathy*: "rejoice with them that rejoice, weep with them that weep."

Delicate sympathy is the true charity of one mind towards another. If it be wanting in the *natural* character, ready correspondence with grace will supply the deficiency, so that we may all be united with one another as though we had but one mind, " being of one mind one towards another."

When we read this Epistle and see what St. Paul sets before us as the least a Christian ought to be, recognising too that such a life is but the *reasonable service* which God has a right to expect from us, we cannot help feeling that the apostolic injunctions are but little heeded in these days, and that the ideal is but seldom realised. One lesson however we may gather, and that is the need of *humility*, seeing how immeasurably short we fall of what God has a right to expect. This will be the beginning of better things with us; it is well for us not to be wise in our own conceits, thinking ourselves better than we are. Let us begin at the lowest step of the ladder, " not minding high things, but consenting to the humble " : this will lead us too to be indulgent with the shortcomings of others, and loving our neighbour whom we see, in spite of his faults, we shall slowly but surely attain the perfection of true charity, the love of God for His own sake.

Third Sunday after the Epiphany

APOSTOLIC COUNSELS

"Providing good things not only in the sight of God, but also in the sight of all men."—(Rom. xii. 17).

It is a strange thing that Christians are no better than they are. It is not for want of instruction: they have Moses and the prophets, the life and teaching of our blessed Lord Himself, the example and continual intercession of His ever blessed mother, and lastly in the Epistles of St. Paul, which we are now reading they have in words inspired by the Holy Ghost, a mine of impressive, direct and yet easy instructions as how to lead a good Catholic life.

Thus in this morning's Epistle, St. Paul sets before us four most important virtues; let us dwell upon each of them for a few moments.

I. *True self-knowledge.*—"Be not wise in your own conceits."

1. Perfect self-knowledge means true humility, for humility is but the true estimate of ourselves.

2. Most of us however have a weak point, some particular in which we acknowledge

no superiority, very often an overweening idea of the maturity of our own judgment.

3. Foolishness of this—the truly wise man is never over-confident: fulness of knowledge of himself and his past mistakes, as well as wide experience of the world, makes him diffident.

4. What long years of sad experience teach the man of the world, grace can do at once for the beginner if he will but learn the lesson of St. Paul, "be not wise in your own conceits."

II. *Forgiveness of injuries.* "To no man rendering evil for evil."

1. We must *expect* injuries at the hands of others. This is only natural in a world like ours, where evil is so inter-mixed with good.

2. If we *expect* evil, we shall not be troubled when it comes upon us, it will be only what we expected and so we shall not be tempted to render evil in return.

3. Evil begets evil, so returning evil for evil is folly, as it only multiplies the evils and miseries of the world, and so recoils upon ourselves.

III. *Good example.* "Providing good things, not only in the sight of God, but also in the sight of all men."

1. A further means of fighting against evil, not merely by not returning it, but giving good example by our good being done openly. Tendency of good example to right the balance in favour of good in this world as against evil.

2. Being Christians, men have a right to expect good example from us, and it will be detracting from religion, that which is its due, if we hide our light under a bushel.

IV. *Love of peace.* "If it be possible, as much as is in you, having peace with all men."

1. A difficult subject: notice the significant qualifications.

2. Peace, one of the greatest of earthly blessings, almost as necessary spiritually as temporally—"Without peace around us, there can be no peace within us," said St. Edmund of Canterbury.

3. But there are times when peace is a curse, when a good though peace-loving man cannot escape conflict except by unworthy betrayal.

4. But where conflict is not absolutely necessary let us imitate St. Paul in being all things to all men. Our opponents to be overcome by returning good for evil.

What a blessed thing it would be were we, as the Sundays of the year go by, to learn, and learn thoroughly, one by one, the many sublime, but none the less practical lessons set before us by St. Paul in these Epistles. May we, before the Mass is over, ask our teacher, the Saint of strong and fiery yet tender love of God and man, to take us by the hand and lead us on to acquire one, at least, of the virtues he has set before us this morning, true self-knowledge, hearty forgiveness of injuries, good example, and peace with God and man.

Septuagesima Sunday

BATTLING FOR THE CROWN

"So run that you may obtain."—(I. Cor., ix. 24).

Heaven is won by strong efforts and strong efforts only; this is the lesson of St. Paul to the Corinthians. Practically a repetition of the warning of our Lord, "the kingdom of heaven suffereth violence, and the violent only bear it away." Such a prize is only to be won as all prizes are by strong efforts, and sustained and unslackened exertions.

I. The Apostle illustrates his warning by the example of the *race*.

1. In the race, only those who come in first obtain the prize, so in like manner laggard Christians run just as much risk of losing their souls as downright sinners.

2. But before the race must come the *training*.

   1. Without training no amount of good will, strength or energy will avail to gain the prize.

   2. This training must be (1) severe, (2) continuous and steady.

3. So the athletes refrain from every indulgence, practise hard, and discipline themselves so as to be able to strain every muscle in the final effort.

3. The reward, only a few bay leaves or a laurel wreath.

What a lesson for us! These men, even when they had done their best, were liable to fail, but with us the crown we seek is certain if we but strive. The laurel wreath quickly withers and the applause of the spectators soon is hushed, but the crown we strive for is everlasting, and the glory is the endless joy of God's eternal kingdom. Yet how little we do! How slow we are in the race, if *race* is a word can be applied to our feeble nerveless efforts! How few lawful indulgences we refrain from, if indeed we refrain from unlawful ones. In fine, is there any effort or attempt at effort on our part?

II. To encourage us St. Paul sets before us his own exertions.

1. He too *runs* and runs swiftly, for the race is not for any uncertain crown.

2. He too fights, and in order to ensure the victory chastises his body and brings it into subjection for the prize is worth it

and cost what may he must not risk losing it.

3. He presumes not on his past, his good works or his preaching, he cannot rest assured until the prize is within his very grasp.

4. He justifies his apparently needless efforts to his Jewish converts, setting before them a warning drawn from the judgments of God on their own forefathers.

   (a) Were they not all marching under the visible sign of God's protection? Had they not all passed through the sea by a stupendous miracle? A figure of the Sacrament of Baptism, the seal of redemption.

   (b) Were they not miraculously fed and given drink in the desert, a figure of the Sacrament of the Body and Blood of our Lord, "for the rock was Christ."

   (c) Yet notwithstanding all these visible signs of God's love, many displeased God and lost their souls irretrievably.

St. Paul's warning to the Corinthians is meant for us too: if he found it necessary to write in

such stirring language to the early converts of the Church in their first fervour, what would he not say to us in these degenerate times. If he, the most hard working and energetic of the Apostles, who in his humility yet could not but say he had done more than all the other Apostles, must needs deny and mortify himself lest he become a castaway, surely it is time for us to awake from the state of torpor into which we have fallen, and to begin to work out our salvation in fear and trembling. "Seek ye first the kingdom of God and His justice."

Sexagesima Sunday

AN APOSTLE PLEADING FOR HIMSELF

"Gladly therefore will I glory in my infirmities that the power of Christ may dwell in me."—(II. Cor. xii. 9).

St. Paul about to return to the Corinthians for the third time—He writes his second Epistle to prepare them for his coming. He fears lest, that in his absence, they have been led away, and their minds poisoned against him; so he puts before them most moving reasons in favour of their still continuing to place all their trust in him as a teacher sent from God. Hence we have the spectacle of an Apostle pleading for himself. He tells them :—

I. That he is in no way surpassed by the new teachers :—

1. they may be Hebrews, Israelites of the seed of Abraham, but so is he :—

2. they may be the ministers of Christ, but so is he, and more for :—

II. He surpassed all other teachers in what he went through :—

1. in labours and painfulness, watchings, hunger and thirst, cold and nakedness :

2. in prisons and stripes, and danger of death oftentimes :—

3. in his weary anxious solicitude for souls—all things to all men—weak with the weak, burning with indignation with the scandalised.

III. He excels them also in the higher graces, the great and glorious mysteries into which God had brought him, and withal touches the deepest depths of human infirmity in the terrible interior crucifixion he endured as the price of these gifts, the ransom he had to pay to win their souls.

How touching to see that St. Paul feels in spite of his humility, that it is well for the Corinthians to know what their salvation has cost!

The needs of men are the same now as in the days when St. Paul strove and prayed and suffered for his flock. Souls must still be saved, and the same price must still be paid. Just as the Precious Blood is shed for all, so must also the ministers, the dispensers of the benefits of the bloodshedding, bear on their garments the stain of the wine-press: they must resist unto blood. How consoling to think that God has chosen as the ministers of the new covenant, not the calm serene might of the angelic nature, but weak sinful men bearing on mortal shoulders a weight too heavy almost for angel's strength! Ponder too, on all the gifts and graces God lavishes so freely for your souls' salvation:—the long silent years

of preparation and study of heavenly science crowned by the mysterious graces of a separate Sacrament: then the lifelong struggle against the world, alone, without human ties, with little help or encouragement: the life of austere loneliness on the mountain of the house of God. Give thanks to God not only for shedding abroad such wondrous gifts, but also for inspiring mortal man to do and suffer so much to carry on the work, and forget not to beg the glorious Apostle, whose burning words we have read, to pray for his brethren of to-day that being made like to him, "neither death nor life nor things present, nor things to come . . . . nor any creature may separate them from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord." (Rom. viii. 38, 39).

Quinquagesima Sunday

THE QUEEN OF VIRTUES

"And now there remain faith, hope, charity, these three, but the greater of these is charity."—(I. Cor. xiii. 13).

Charity is in very truth the queen of all virtues; such is the burden of St. Paul's teaching: there is no restraint about him as he dilates on its praises, its qualities and its necessity.

I. The necessity of charity; without charity nothing can avail:—

1. Not even language however beautiful, thoughts however noble, nobly expressed, tones and accents sweeter than the songs of angels, for charity is the soul of speech, the vivifying principle of all utterance that seeks God:
2. not even full knowledge of, and the preaching of the most glorious mysteries hidden from all previous ages:—
3. not even pouring forth knowledge beyond what is given to man to know:—
4. aye, not even faith, steadfast as the rock, clear as vision, strong enough to move mountains:

5. aye and more, giving up all and dying a cruel death to attest that faith.

None of these have any avail, if charity be wanting. What more could St. Paul say to show that charity is all in all ?

II. The excellences of charity. If the soul have but charity, how glowing is the Apostle's description of its endless joys and fruits !

1. Its winning qualities.—Its patience that never tires—its kindness that is always tender—its absence of envy and self- seeking —its absolute sincerity, its humility, its lowly ways, its unprovokedness.
2. A shield against all sin.—It thinks no evil, much less speaks it—it rejoices not in any sin, no matter how much is gained by it—it loves truth ; false is the charity that thinks it a kindness sometimes to lie.
3. A motive for fortitude.—With godlike forbearance it waits though all things seem wrong, borne up by living faith, seeing by the light of hope the restoration of all things—charity prevailing triumphant,—reigning untrammelled and unfettered in God's eternal Kingdom.

A day will come when faith shall be no more, for it will be merged in vision, when hope shall have passed into fruition, but charity shall still

remain for ever and ever. When that which is perfect shall have come, when prophecy shall no more be needed, when our puny earthly knowledge shall have been succeeded by the full clear intuition of eternity, when we shall see no longer in the twilight of faith, but by the clear bright light of glory, charity shall still exist undimmed through eternal ages.

First Sunday of Lent

THE ACCEPTABLE TIME

"Behold now is the acceptable time, now is the day of salvation.—(II. Cor. vi. 2).

Alas, when will men understand that now is the acceptable time? They are always putting off the day of their conversion, imagining that to-morrow, or some future time will be more convenient or more befitting, but St. Paul says—No, *to-day, now.*

I. The danger of delay.

1. The grace of God comes swiftly and silently: the moment it speaks to our souls is the "*acceptable time.*"
2. It is often given only for that moment, to be corresponded with *instantly* or never at all. "If thou also hadst known and that in this *thy day,* the things that are to thy peace." (St. Luke, xix. 42). It is grace for *to-day,* not for to-morrow.
3. Hence does St. Paul entreat his Corinthian converts:—"We exhort you that you receive not the grace of God in vain." It is in the day of salvation that help comes, and lo, behold, that day is *to-day.*

Let us not put off the service of God any longer; every day brings with it its special grace, each

grace being intended to advance us a step further in the way of salvation. How foolish for us to think of choosing to begin to serve God later on, when at the very moment the pressing invitations of God are raining down upon us.

II. God however chooses certain times as seasons of special grace. This holy season of Lent is above all, the time of God's special visitation, a time when the sinner finds it much easier to make his peace with God.

1. It is in the springtide of the year, when men gladdened by the sight of renewed life in the world around them, feel that it is a time for new plans and fresh beginnings.
2. There are also the special graces that come from the united prayer and penance of the entire Church; the heart finds it easier to turn to and think of God.
3. There is also the special invitation to arise from sin by a good confession, and to approach God's altar to receive His most sacred Body and Blood, the two great means of becoming reconciled and united to God; and in order that all may profit by these means of grace, the Church enjoins them with the full weight of her authority.

Yes, *to-day*, this holy season of Lent, is the *acceptable time*. Let it not pass unheeded as so many of God's graces and warnings in the past. Who knows but that this may be the last Lent for some of us, the last time God entreats, beseeches, pleads with us, before time is no more, and we stand before the awful majesty of our Judge. Oh, harden not your hearts now that God is calling you; this is the day of salvation when He is willing and able to help you if only you but turn to Him. Oh, "turn to the Lord your God, for He is gracious and merciful, patient and rich in mercy." (Joel, ii. 13.)

Second Sunday of Lent

DETACHMENT FROM THINGS OF EARTH

"For God hath not called us unto uncleanness, but unto sanctification."—(I. Thess. iv. 7).

A persecution in Thessalonica—St. Paul forced to leave the city. He writes his Epistle to encourage them in their tribulation and to recall to their minds his counsels. Many of them being converts from paganism were no doubt exceedingly liable to fall back into their former besetting sins: so the Apostle warns them against two failings especially, both arising from a want of *solidity* of faith. True faith detaches the heart from all affection to things of earth, by instilling the knowledge and desire of heavenly things.

Invoking the power of the Holy Name, St. Paul beseeches them:—

I. To practise the virtue of purity.
   1. Hardly recognised in the heathen world they had only recently learnt to love and cherish it.
   2. But since their bodies had been made the temples of the Holy Ghost, the immensity of the dignity forbade all that was gross and unworthy:

3. and their minds enlightened by the light of truth, shewed them the *necessity* of restraint.

II. To be scrupulously honest in all their dealings: not to take undue advantage of others, nor to increase their gains by unworthy means.

1. The love of money, one of the strongest of human passions, and so especially singled out by St. Paul.
2. It is also most insidious: often at first does not show itself in any gross form, but if indulged in, almost inevitably leads to downright dishonesty—hard bargains and clever strokes of business, which though sanctioned by the world, yet are most hateful in the sight of God: "the Lord is the avenger of these things."
3. Being insidious is also most tenacious: —the conscience not being alarmed, inordinate love of money and its attendant vices live on in spite of years of apparently devout reception of the Sacraments. In other respects a man's life may be blameless, but this one vice is enough to cause the eternal loss of his soul.

At the close of his exhortation, St. Paul puts before his converts the one great fact to be borne in mind, the remembrance of which will keep

them unspotted in the midst of an unbelieving world :—" The day of the Lord shall so come as a thief in the night . . but you brethren are not in the darkness, that that day should overtake you as a thief," (I. Thess. v. 2, 4). There would be no excuse for them if they failed in the practice of the virtues St. Paul had taught them—they had received the light of faith ; (I. Thess. v. 5)—they had been warned, they were not asleep, they knew of the Judge at whose coming the hidden things of darkness would come to light. They must be awake and up and doing (v. 6) ; they must search into their lives, examine their actions, words, desires—they must live lives of faith, hope and charity (v. 8). Let us too, brethren, scan our lives in the light of these warnings, and see if there be aught in them that the Apostle would condemn. Let us be just, nay severe in our judgment of ourselves so that when the day of the Lord shall come, and the fire shall have burnt away the straw and stubble, there may be found naught in our lives but the gold, silver and precious stones of our good works.

Third Sunday of Lent

THE CHILDREN OF THE LIGHT

"Be ye therefore followers of God."—(Eph. v. 1).

Years have passed since St. Paul stood in the synagogue at Ephesus speaking of the Lord Jesus, since the clergy of Ephesus led him down for the last time to the sea-shore at Miletus with much weeping, for they knew they should never see his face again; but neither years of absence nor bonds has cooled the intensity of the Saint's affection. He addresses them as "most dear children," and reiterating the lesson of his Master, "be ye perfect as your heavenly Father is perfect" (St. Matth. v. 48), entreats them to become "followers of God"; to copy the divine perfections, God's Justice, Truth, Holiness and Mercy, but above all His Love, which brought Him down from heaven to draw us to Himself by the cords of Adam. Trembling in his love for them, their spiritual father warns them not merely against sin, but more especially against its *occasions*.

I. They are not merely to avoid gross sin, but by never so much as speaking of it, to safeguard themselves against its inroads:

1. The very silence will produce a feeling of horror and revulsion in their minds.

2. Such silence can be the only attitude of one who speaks to God in prayer—on whose tongue the Holy of Holies has rested; the tongue that was made to speak truth, justice and judgment, to give praise and thanksgiving to God.

A man cannot serve two masters, if he give himself up to serve sin, he can have no inheritance in the Kingdom of Christ and God.

II. They are also to avoid those who try to deceive them with vain words, the Sophists who abounded in the gay and brilliant capital of Lesser Asia.

1. A warning most needed, to restrain them from endangering their faith.
2. These children of unbelief were sowing the seeds of scepticism and atheism broadcast.
3. "Let them not deceive you" the Apostle cries out; "be not partakers with them," avoid them: there can be no common ground on which you can meet them without danger; they are still the children of darkness as you once were, but you have come out from that darkness and have now the light. "Walk then as children of the light."

Has this lesson of St. Paul no meaning for us in these days of unbelief and decay of faith?

How many Catholics deliberately put themselves into the danger of losing their faith, by consorting habitually with those who have no belief in revealed truth; by indiscriminate reading of books and newspapers that attack religion or Holy Scripture! Think not such things can do you no harm; you cannot touch pitch and not be defiled; you cannot pass through the fire without the smell of the fire being left on your garments, except by a miracle, and God does not work miracles for those who needlessly expose themselves to danger.

Times have changed but little since St. Paul, trembling for the faith and virtue of his little flock in the midst of an unbelieving and giddy generation, wrote to them so earnestly and so practically. If we wish to avoid sin there is but one way, and one way only—*Avoid the occasions.* Avoid those who instil doubts into your minds with specious reasonings, empty-headed fools who talk for the pleasure of hearing their own voice, reckoning little the harm they do. Avoid above all those whose speech is of things that cannot be mentioned without sin; carefulness about speech will keep the mind and heart pure. Remember you are the children of the light, the light of faith, that guides our steps so surely and so safely, leading us on into the paths of "goodness and justice and truth."

Fourth Sunday of Lent

THE LAW OF LIBERTY

"So then brethren, we are not the children of the bondwoman, but of the free."—(Gal. iv. 31).

False teachers had striven to compel the Galatians to observe the law of Moses, and some of them had given way. St. Paul in his love for liberty in all things that are not sinful, devotes his Epistle to proving the right of his gentile converts to their christian liberty. Christians are the real children of Abraham, the sons of promise, whilst those who adhere to the "weak and needy elements" of the Jerusalem which then was in bondage with her children, are in reality now the children of the bondwoman. But Christians living under the new law, emancipated from the thraldom of petty observances, the badge of servitude, are not to imagine that they are thereby bound by no law. Our Lord came not to destroy but to *fulfil* the law. "You have been called unto liberty, only make not liberty an occasion to the flesh," he goes on to say immediately. The law of liberty is fulfilled in one word—"Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself," and "walk in the spirit."

This then is "the liberty with which God has made us free," the liberty to do what is good.

I. To lead supernatural lives—"walk in the spirit." No longer bound by minute and trying observances, we are to take off our attention from things of earth, resting our minds on the unseen things of the supernatural order.

1. Grace, prayer, the sacraments, the spirit of penance, acts of the love of God, of the theological virtues.
2. The thought too of that other and higher creation, the hosts of the angels in their majesty and beauty, surpassing anything we now see, or can imagine.
3. To crown all, the thought of the bright glorious home above, where our throne and crown await us.

Hence the church prays—"Ut mentes nostras ad cœlestia desideria erigas." The soul that lives recollected, occupied with higher things, is not easily tempted by gross earthly pleasures.

II. Living then a supernatural life, we must order our love of others on supernatural motives: it must be:—

1. Unselfish, not through self interest.
2. Intense, "love thy neighbour *as thyself*," and so self-sacrificing, putting our neighbour in the place of self.

3. Supernatural, for God's sake.

Such a love as this far transcends any of the merely formal duties of the Old Law.

Do we sufficiently thank Our Lord for His "most plentiful redemption"? He has not redeemed us merely from sin, but from the law of fear, when God showed His face as a Master. Do we also try to lead lives worthy of the glorious state of liberty in which he has placed us? Are not our lives in great part merely natural animal lives, wanting both in the strictness of the Old Law and the generosity of the New? This holy season of Lent is above all a time to scrutinize our lives, to see if we are leading them in a manner worthy of "the liberty wherewith Christ hath made us free." (Gal. v. 1.)

Passion Sunday

THE PRECIOUS BLOOD

"But Christ being come, a high priest of the good things to come . . . . . by His own blood entered once into the holies, having obtained eternal redemption."—(Heb. ix. 11, 12).

The afternoon of the Day of Atonement—the high priest in his full pontifical garments, after offering sacrifices for his own and the people's sins, creeps into the Holy of Holies, bearing in his hands a vessel of blood from the sacrifice.—Outside, the multitude hushed and recollected, strung up to intensity by the long 24 hours' fast. Having entered, the High Priest sprinkles the blood, and offers incense as an atonement for the sins of all the people. Every detail, explained by St. Paul as a figure of the reality that was to come.

The reality. The High Priest of the good things to come has now offered once for all the sacrifice for the people—no need for Him to offer for His own sins, as did the Jewish high priest. Entering into the Holy of Holies, now made manifest, i.e., into heaven whose gate is now open; the veil of His most sacred body being rent asunder, (Heb. xi. 20); bearing not the blood of goats or of calves, but His own most Precious Blood, the price of our redemption.

I. Think of the *price* of your redemption: "not gold or silver . . . but with the precious blood of Christ as of a lamb unspotted and undefiled." (II. Pet. i. 10.)

1. He begins to shed His Blood almost in His crib.
2. The Passion. In His agony the Blood flowing through every pore—His sacred Body torn with the scourges—the crown of thorns piercing the Temples—His Hands and Feet nailed to the ignominious tree—blood and water flowing from His Side opened by the spear, "the fountain open for the cleansing of the sinner." (Zach. xiii. 1.)

II. The lessons of redemption.

1. "You are bought with a great price. Glorify and bear God in your body." (I. Cor. vi. 20.)
2. We are to "cleanse our conscience from dead works." (Heb. ix. 15.)—To wash ourselves from every stain of sin in the fountain opened in Jerusalem—To have our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience. (Heb. ix. 22.)—To throw off our bad habits as the Hebrew converts were admonished to cast off the Old Law, that which is perfect having come.

3. Then in the joy of a good conscience to begin to serve the living God. Picture to yourselves the joy and light-heartedness with which the Jewish converts strove to live up to the Apostle's teachings, when they realised that the almost insupportable burden of the Old Law had been taken off their shoulders.

Often call to mind during this Passiontide, the price of our redemption—often make acts of gratitude to our Lord for His having taken pity on our miseries—but above all forget not to wash out all sin by a good and fervent reception of the Sacrament of Penance, remembering that at the words of absolution our souls are flooded with the Precious Blood. "Blessed are they that wash their robes in the blood of the Lamb." (Apoc. xxii. 14.)

Palm Sunday

CHRIST A PATTERN OF HUMILITY

"He humbled Himself."—(Phil. ii. 8).

1. The Apostle exhorts us to be of the same mind as Christ Jesus our Lord.

I. He is our exemplar—we have been given the high privilege of being permitted to follow in His footsteps.

2. No greater glory, no higher call, could be conferred upon us, than that He should be our model—than that we should be bidden copy in our lives the virtues and perfections of His.

3. A consequence of the Incarnation. The thought of our Lord's infinite condescension, and of the dignity conferred upon us, ought to nerve us to follow Him faithfully step by step, no matter what it cost us.

II. Humility, the great lesson of the Incarnation.

1. Strictly speaking, humility not possible in a God of infinite perfection.

2. The Incarnation however affords our Lord the opportunity of setting us an example of humility such as the world could hardly conceive.

3. The infinite Lord of heaven and earth, yet He emptied Himself—not of his Godhead, which was impossible—but of all His Godhead could claim, and made Himself a servant—not to God, but to men, aye even to the most worthless of men.
4. In His life, like to His brethren in all things, sin only excepted—in hardship, sorrow, pain, and all the laws and accidents that govern men's lives.
5. In His death, sounding the lowest depths of humiliation—obedient as to the very manner of His death, to what sinners imposed upon Him, the shameful and painful death of the cross.

After this, how can pride find a place in our lives?

III. The reward of humility:—"For which cause God hath exalted Him." (Phil. ii. 9.)

1. A law of God's creation that humility has a claim to exaltation. "He hath put down the mighty from their seat, and exalted the humble." (St. Luke, i. 52.) Humility like suffering, always casts a halo round the sufferer.
2. Our Lord's humility sheds an additional glory on our Lord's sacred humanity.—The holy name given in view of His death.—

> A name above all names, at which every knee shall bow—the devils who were cast out rather than adore Him, must now tremble and bow the knee at the mention of that holy name. His humiliation unto death has won what the infinite majesty of God failed to obtain.

Let us learn the wisdom of humility, the first and principal virtue by which we imitate our Divine Lord. Humility is the first step in the way of perfection, for humility is but truth, the truth that shall make us free—free from false conceit, from pride and all the brood of sins that own pride for parent.

Easter Sunday

THE ETERNAL PASSOVER

"Therefore let us feast."—(I. Cor. v. 8).

After the darkness cometh the dawn—after sorrow, joy; so after the weary painful bondage of the old law and the gloom of Calvary, we are now in the full liberty of the new covenant, and the radiant brightness of the risen life, a joy surpassing even the gladness of the feast when God's people recalled the day on which He had brought them out of the Egypt of bondage with a strong hand.

Picture to yourselves the joy of that greatest of feasts; of the Pasch, as St. Paul's Jewish converts had known it: the days of preparation—the scouring of the home—the delight of the children of the household at the prospect of the brightness and good things to come; on the eve, the householder searching into every nook and cranny of the dwelling, lest there should remain the slightest particle of leaven—then the evening feast, the lamb, the child's question, the story of the deliverance—the eight long days of unleavened bread spent in restful peaceful joy. Such is the picture St. Paul puts before us, basing on it lessons of our new life as Christians.

I. *Now* is the true paschal feast, begun by the death of the Lamb, but never to have an end: its eternal duration foreshadowed by the former eight-day feast, the octave being a figure of eternity. Enter then into the spirit of the feast.

1. Rejoice and thank God for our deliverance.
2. Give up all sinful and earthly pleasures, as in the old days they refrained from their ordinary occupations.
3. Feast in gladness, not with earthly feasting, "the leaven of malice and wickedness," but in "the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth," that new banquet so clearly foreshadowed in the unleavened bread of the Passover.

Hence brethren, does the church wish us to join in the joy of this feast by approaching God's altar to receive into our hearts the true Paschal Lamb, the source of all our joy to-day. He it is who infuses into our hearts the joy we now experience, a foretaste of heaven. At the Paschal Feast did the New Covenant begin, the eternal Passover never to have an end. No wonder then, that as we commemorate it, the sublimed joy of the whole cycle of the feasts of the year, seems concentrated on this one Easter day. But how

can we expect to feel this joy, if we have no share in the feast of the Lamb ?

II. Having joined the feast, continue to keep it *worthily*.

1. A lesson for those who have received our Lord to-day. St. Paul identifies Christians who have partaken of the feast with the feast itself, " as you are unleavened."
2. Our actions, our lives ought to be worthy of our Head : we must purge out the old leaven, the leaven of past sin, of evil habits, of occasions of sin, and begin to lead lives worthy of our Lord, whose members we have become. When tempted, let us ask ourselves what our Lord would have done in similar circumstances.

To-day, above all other days of the year, is a day of joy, but its sweetness is felt only by those who faithfully follow out St. Paul's counsels ; but to them what a day of holy peaceful joy, the sweet, tempered joy of those who have come out of Egypt, of those who have washed their robes and made them white in the Blood of the Lamb, in very truth the foretaste of the joy of those who sit down, safe at last, in the golden radiance of the marriage feast of the Lamb, the eternal Passover.

Low Sunday

THE LIFE OF FAITH

"And this is the victory which overcometh the world our faith."—(I. John, v. 4).

The source of all a Christian's strength is his faith. Faith is the power of God within us, triumphantly bearing down the world.

I. The world is the enemy.

1. The Apostle who drew all his knowledge, his spirit, his inspiration from the loving Heart of his Master, singles out the world as the one great obstacle to be overcome.
2. The world most determined—its enmity a never ceasing one. "If the world hate you, know ye, that it hath hated Me first." (St. John, xv. 18.)
3. It succeeds in ensnaring men's souls where other enemies fail.
4. Is so obdurate and insidious that Faith alone can defeat it.

II. But Faith is the victor—"And this is the victory which overcometh the world, our faith." Faith living and flourishing in our souls, strengthening them with the sublime authority of God's word, setting before us the vivid reality

of the Incarnation of Jesus Christ, "the Author and Finisher of our Faith," enables us to rise triumphantly above all the low and debased views and principles of the world.

1. Faith lives in a region where the world's principles and laws find no sanction, in which temporal affairs are of minor importance.
2. In the sacrament of Penance, Faith demands truth, where the world calls for peace before truth.
3. Faith sets up moral principle against expediency, and as ages roll by, sees principle ever victorious.
4. Oftentimes Faith must judge the world and the great ones of the world as the enemies of God, worldly ends, as worthless or worse; and calling its own chosen ones from out of the world begets in them a quiet settled contempt for pleasure, comfort and ambitions, for all the world sets its heart upon.

But if Faith is to do all this it must be a living Faith,—like all God's gifts it must be jealously guarded, it must be increased and deepened by meditation and prayer, exercised by works of charity, lest it become a dead faith.

III. Whence comes this power of victory?

1. The *Incarnation,* by which, through union with our Lord, we are endowed with God's power over the enemies of our salvation: "*Who is he that overcometh the world, but he that believeth that Jesus Christ is the Son of God.*"

2. The *Sacraments,* the weapons placed in our hands by our Lord, who came "*not by water only,*" not bestowing merely one sacrament, but shedding abroad on us the fulness of all the Sacramental graces purchased by the shedding of His most Precious Blood.

3. The *solidity* of our faith resting on the *motives of credibility,* and the supreme *authority* of God's own word, "*There are three who give testimony.*"

Faith is our dearest possession, the stronghold against which the temptations of the devil, the world and the flesh can avail nothing: the key of heaven, the support of our lives on earth, the sunshine that gladdens our souls, giving vigour and refreshment to our jaded spirits as we toil along the ways of earth with our eyes set on the heavenly Jerusalem.

Second Sunday after Easter

OUR DIVINE MODEL

"Christ also suffered for us, leaving you an example."—(I. Peter, ii. 21).

The greatness of the dignity of a Christian, a follower of Our Blessed Lord, should raise him far above all unworthiness and littleness. Christians are "*a chosen generation, a kingly priesthood, a holy nation, a purchased people*" (I. Peter, ii. 9); they must then lay aside "*all malice, and all guile, and dissimulations, and envies, and all detractions.*" (I. Peter, ii. 1.) They are to war against carnal desires, to maintain a good name, to be submissive to all authority for God's sake, to suffer wrongs patiently. Then in order that we may be strengthened to do all this, with what tender touching strokes does St. Peter portray for us our Divine Model. The tear-dimmed eyes of the saint no longer gaze on the well-known, well beloved figure of his Master, but memories of thousands of gracious acts are fresh still in a heart that loved exceedingly.

I. Let us dwell for a few moments on the image that came before St. Peter's eyes as he recalled the memory of his Lord and Master.

1. His innocence, the unspotted purity of the eternal Godhead, manifest in all His words and actions.
2. In spite of His innocence, His suffering, borne in patience for the sake of others.

a. Reviled, and not reviling, suffering yet threatening not, though the legions of Angels around Him were awaiting but a word, a look, to strike to the earth His persecutors.

b. Delivering Himself up voluntarily to be judged unjustly, foregoing the right to strict justice, which the most depraved criminal could claim.

c. Bearing the punishment and bitterness of *our sins* both in His Body and Soul, as he hung upon the tree, anguish and agony crowding every avenue of sense and thought —the sickening load of the accumulated sins of a hardened world—the agony of His dereliction.

II. Such is the example given to us by God made man, our Divine Model. He underwent this suffering so that by His stripes we might be healed—healed from the wound of sin, healed too from the after consequences of sin that make us so cowardly, so shrinking, so averse to suffering. We went astray like sheep, everyone into his own

way, but He has come to seek, to save, to show us the way back into the pastures of eternal life. But we must follow him faithfully, in contempt for the world, in humility, in love of suffering.

III. O blessed God-like suffering, livery of our Divine Master, purple robe of God's elect, let us not refuse to accept thee when God would have us do so. He, the loving "*shepherd and bishop*" of our souls, knows what is best for us. It is well that we should be like Him, patient, mortified, tried in the fire of suffering like gold in the furnace. Lent, the time of special penance, has passed away, but St. Peter's loving words remind us that the spirit of penance ought ever to be present in our souls if we would preserve ourselves from going astray, if we would keep close to the Shepherd and Bishop of our souls.

Third Sunday after Easter

STRANGERS AND PILGRIMS

"I beseech you as strangers and pilgrims."—(I. Peter, ii, 11).

Such is our condition, strangers and pilgrims. "*We have not here a lasting city, but we seek that which is to come.*" (Heb., xiii. 14.) The sky overhead may be bright, the earth smiling in all its beauty at our feet, but it is for all that a land of exile. We are to pass through it as travellers pass through foreign lands, feeling that they are but birds of passage, unattracted by the more brilliant beauty of sunnier climes, for their eyes and their hearts are centred on their own home—"*Upon the rivers of Babylon there we sat and wept when we remembered Sion.*" (Ps., cxxxvi. 1.) How this thought must have come home to St. Peter writing his epistle from "*the church that is in Babylon.*" (I. Peter, v. 13.)

I. As strangers and pilgrims.
   1. No earthly interests will be able to absorb us, our duties and our interests are not here.
   2. Being wayfarers, as the milestone years go by, our thoughts will constantly

turn to the goal of our journey, the home in heaven where dwell the children of our Father.

Strangers and pilgrims! No words are better worth remembering, for if we live as such with mind and heart set on our Father's house, all earthly things will lose their glamour and attractiveness in the light of the joys which eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, nor hath it entered into the heart of man to conceive.

II. Being in this world as strangers and pilgrims our hearts ought then be free from all earthly desires and mere self-seeking; free with the liberty with which God has made us free, free as children of God, citizens of the heavenly city, bound by no sordid earthly cares. Hence does St. Peter warn Christians:—

1. To give up earthly and sinful pleasures. (I. Peter, ii. 11.)
2. To give edification by their good works (I. Peter, ii. 12); not merely by abstaining from sin, but by the works of supererogation, which entire detachment from the world will enable them to practise, such as:— (1) being subject "*to every human creature for God's sake,*" making themselves in imitation of their Divine Master the least of all. (St. Luke, xxi.i 26). (2). Subjects

especially, to exhibit honour and obedience to those over them, even when on account of the harshness or unreasonableness of the commands laid upon them, they are not strictly bound to do so.

"*For this is thanksworthy.*" What a reward! To be thanked by the lips of our blessed Lord Himself, thanked by Him because we have followed in His footsteps, because we have been generous, not niggardly in His service. "*Blessed are ye,*" He says "*when they shall revile you and persecute you*"; "blessed are they that suffer persecution for justice sake." (St. Matth., v. 10, 11). What if we have to endure pain and sorrow! "*You shall have distress in the world, but fear not, I have overcome the world.*" "If they have persecuted me, they will also persecute you." (St. John, xv. 20.)

Strangers and pilgrims! That is our portion. To plod on wearily, but withal cheerfully through the desert of the world, with our eyes fixed on Jesus, Who awaits us with outstretched hands saying, "I have gone before you to prepare a place for you. *I will come again and will take you to Myself, that where I am, you also may be.*" (St. John, xiv. 3.)

Fourth Sunday after Easter

GRATITUDE FOR GOD'S GIFTS

"Every best gift and every perfect gift is from above."—(St. James, i. 19).

A gift is a special mark of favour and affection—not bestowed upon all—greater or less according to the degree of affection.

I. How great then is God's love?

1. *To all* He has given gifts in the natural order—marks of His personal love—no human creature left out.

2. *To us Christians,* how much greater gifts, singling us out for the more special marks of His love, the priceless and untold treasures of His graces.

1. The clear bright light of faith. 2. The Sacraments. 3. The protection of our Blessed Lady, the fellowship and prayers of the angels and saints of God. 4. The grandeurs of the Church, the heritage of the saints into which He has called us by an act of singular predilection and personal favour.

II. How unworthy we who are the objects of God's love.

1. There were no merits of our own to justify His choice.

1. We were all in original sin. 2. He might have created other beings far more worthy of His love, with characters and dispositions far more obedient, far more loving. 3. He saw in us all our manifold sins of commission and omission.

2. But "*of His own will,*" He has done all these wonderful things in us, bringing us into the broad glad life of truth "*that we might be some beginning of His creature,*" the first fruits of the new creation.

III. How readily then, how gladly, how gratefully should we do God's most holy Will; we should be—

1. "*Swift to hear,*" (v. 19) like Samuel, "*Speak Lord for Thy servant heareth.*" (I Kings, iii. 10.) "*How sweet are Thy words . . . more than honey in my mouth,*" (Ps., cxviii. 103); listening for the "*Voice of the Lord upon the waters*" of this world, the Voice of the Lord coming in power. (Ps., xxviii. 3, 4.)

2. "*Slow to speak.*" (v. 19.) How much sin comes about through unconsidered speech. "*If any man offend not in word the same is a perfect man.*" (St. James, iii. 2.) Our very dignity as recipients of

God's favours ought to make us weigh our words and not squander God's gifts in aimless talk. "*It is good to hide the secret of a king.*" (Job, xii. 7.)

3. "*Slow to anger.*" (v. 19.) A mark of our gratitude. How unnatural to burn with resentment against a fellow creature on account of some slight injury! He too is the object of God's special love; if God loves him and bestows on him graces and blessings, how can we dare to be angry with him. "*Thou wicked servant . . . shouldst not thou have had compassion also on thy fellow servant, even as I had compassion on thee?*" (St. Matth., iii. 33.)

Happy we, if we become penetrated with St. James's spirit of loving humble gratitude towards God. It will keep us *safe from sin*, as we shall be always on the watch to listen to God's voice. (Ps., cxxii, 1, 2.) We shall soon *attain perfection*; our spirit of recollection will enable us to bridle our tongues. We shall taste of the fruits of that *peace* with our neighbour, a foretaste of that eternal joy, whose nearest earthly expression seems to be the one word—Peace. "Illi autem sunt in pace." (Wisd., iii. 3.)

Fifth Sunday after Easter

THE PRACTICAL CHRISTIAN

"Be ye doers of the word, not hearers only."—(St. James, i. 22).

Self-delusion in religion is very common. Just as at the present day, so also at the beginning St. James found amongst the first Christians, unreality and hypocrisy in many who set themselves up as religious people.

I. There always will be a large class of Christians:—

1. Who imagine that assisting at religious services, hearing instructions and sermons, is sufficient compliance with all the duties of religion.
2. Whose piety begins and ends with emotions and feelings.
3. In whose eyes religion is an end in itself, not a *means* to an end.

Self-delusion, as St. James points out is the origin of this unhappy mistake a mistake that, unless the mercy of God specially intervenes to rescue its victims, will lead them on to destruc-

tion. Many a poor soul has been lost through this miserable self-delusion. Persons of little understanding joined to wilfulness of disposition, fall an easy prey to it: the tribunal of Penance is its great detector and corrective, but its unhappy victims give God's minister no chance, by wandering from one confessor to another seeking in vain a sedative for their diseased minds.

II. It cannot be too well understood that religion is measured not by professions, feelings or pious sentiments, but by acts of self-denial, charity, and the assiduous cultivation and exercise of the Christian virtues.

1. As we listen to God's word we may see ourselves depicted in the preacher's picture, like "*a man beholding his own countenance in a glass.*" (I. 23.)
2. If the impression however only lasts till the end of the sermon, and afterwards the mind immediately returns to other objects, no real good, no profit, no permanent result has been attained, but we are like the man who "*beheld himself and went his way and presently forgot what manner of man he was.*" (I. 24.)
3. Such a person may go away feeling that another duty of religion has been discharged, whereas really it has not been

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Self-delusion, as St. James points out is the origin of this unhappy mistake a mistake that, unless the mercy of God specially intervenes to rescue its victims, will lead them on to destruc-

tion. Many a poor soul has been lost through this miserable self-delusion. Persons of little understanding joined to wilfulness of disposition, fall an easy prey to it: the tribunal of Penance is its great detector and corrective, but its unhappy victims give God's minister no chance, by wandering from one confessor to another seeking in vain a sedative for their diseased minds.

II. It cannot be too well understood that religion is measured not by professions, feelings or pious sentiments, but by acts of self-denial, charity, and the assiduous cultivation and exercise of the Christian virtues.

1. As we listen to God's word we may see ourselves depicted in the preacher's picture, like "*a man beholding his own countenance in a glass.*" (I. 23.)
2. If the impression however only lasts till the end of the sermon, and afterwards the mind immediately returns to other objects, no real good, no profit, no permanent result has been attained, but we are like the man who "*beheld himself and went his way and presently forgot what manner of man he was.*" (I. 24.)
3. Such a person may go away feeling that another duty of religion has been discharged, whereas really it has not been

Sunday within the Octave of the Ascension

THE BOND OF CHARITY

"But before all things, have a constant mutual charity among yourselves."—(I. Pet., iv. 8).

"*The end of all things is at hand*": day after day men are falling under the scythe of the reaper, Death. As men on the deck of a sinking ship, as soldiers going into battle, so must Christians sink all animosities, forgive all wrongs, and persevere to the end in the constant exercise of mutual charity.

I. *Means to attain the virtue of fraternal charity.*

1. *Natural,* by the exercise of the cardinal virtue of *prudence.*

   Prudence is the true estimate of things according to the light of reason—it shows the folly of snapping the bonds that bind us in charity and peace—injury always brings its own nemesis.—Hence the philosopher of old defined all virtue, as being merely a kind of prudence.

2. *Supernatural,* by the use of *prayer,* by which every good and perfect gift is as it were extorted from Our Father in heaven.

II. *The reward of charity:* forgiveness of sin.

1. "*Charity covereth a multitude of sins.*"
2. The merciful have a special claim on God's mercy. "*Blessed are the merciful.*" (St. Matth., v. 7.)
3. Alms, one of the great antidotes to sin. "*Redeem thy sins by alms.*" (Dan., iv. 24.)
4. The last Judgment to turn on this alone.

III. Charity to be practised towards:—

1. Our fellow Christians especially; opening to one another our home and our heart with generous unmurmuring hospitality, not expecting any return:
2. All our fellow men; as God acts towards all men, making his sun to shine on the just and the unjust. We are but God's *stewards,* all his gifts are but lent to us in order that we may use them first for our own salvation, and then for the good of others. Hence charity should appear:—

a. In our *words.* "*If any man speak, let him speak as the words of God,*" "*who, when he was reviled, did not revile,*" (I. Pet., ii. 23)—Charity in speech a quality lovable even in the eyes of the world—Pharisaical haughtiness, a quality that often scandalises worldlings when they

see it in the lives of those who profess themselves followers of the Teacher of meekness.

b. In our *acts*, "*as of the power which God administereth*," like our Lord who went about doing good to *all*, not favouring some unduly at the expense of others, for such is not true charity.

The end of all charity is the glory of God who made us: we love our fellow man for the sake of God, who deigned to make him by a special act of individual creative love: we love our neighbour too for the sake of our blessed Lord, who became his brother, who endured the shame and death of the cross for his sake as well as for ourselves. Hence is it that in the practice of constant mutual charity, God receives abundant honour through our Lord Jesus Christ, "*to whom is glory and empire for ever and ever. Amen.*"

Whit Sunday

THE FOUNDATION OF THE CHURCH

"When the days of Pentecost were accomplished, they were all together in one place."—(Acts, ii. 1).

We are here told the story of the coming down of the Holy Ghost and the foundation of the Church of God. The event of to-day is the completion of the life and labours of our blessed Lord, the crowning of the time and pains He had spent upon the training of His apostles. For the apostles themselves, it was the beginning of an entirely new life: hitherto they were weak and faltering, now they were confirmed in grace: hitherto shrinking disciples, now they must be the apostles and teachers, the pillars and strong support of the church of God.

How did they prepare for this momentous event?

I. *They were all of one mind.* (Acts, i. 14.)

1. The jealousies and ambitions of the past found no place in them now. Sorrow had blended them in one; the coming of God's kingdom filled them with a desire into which no selfish motive entered. The glory of God was all in all.

2. The original idea of creation, all men to form one family, with God for their Father, was realised now in the perfect union that existed in the infant church in that upper chamber

II. "*They were persevering in prayer.*" (Acts, i. 14.) God gives many graces without any prayer at all, and many too in answer to prayer that is feeble, inconstant and unfervent, but the prayer of the apostles for one another was *humble, persevering and full of faith.*

1. Faith animated their prayer with the promise of our Lord.
2. Hope gave it *perseverance.*
3. Charity blended their prayer into one common cry.
4. Humility gave it its piercing efficacy.

III. "*With Mary, the mother of Jesus.*" (i. 14.) Thus began devotion to our blessed Lady; the filial love that in all necessities would fain make her unite her petitions with ours.

1. From the sinless heart of the spouse of the Holy Ghost, went up in union with her children, the petition that three and thirty years before had brought down from His throne the eternal Son, and that now called down her Spouse to glorify the Son of Man.

2. The three interventions of the Holy Ghost: at Creation, at the Incarnation, and now, lastly, when the Church, the new Creation, starts into life without spot or wrinkle.

We too have received of the outpouring of the Spirit of God at our Baptism and Confirmation, but if we wish to preserve the graces we then received, if we wish them to fructify, the same conditions, the same dispositions must be found in us as were found in the hearts of the apostles in the Upper Chamber, union and brotherly love, perseverance in prayer, a filial love towards our blessed Lady. Then shall the Spirit of God enfold us with His heavenly grace, fortify our souls to do manfully, and perfect within us His divine work—our sanctification.

First Sunday after Pentecost

LOVE THE FULFILMENT OF THE LAW

"God is Charity."—(I. St. John, iv. 8).

The beloved disciple has only one theme—the love of God. With him everything turns to love. He never tires, but rather with endless reiteration repeats the heavenly truth that God is Love, and that all true worship of God is a worship of love. The cold performance of duty finds no approval at the hands of St. John, "*he that loveth not, knoweth not God.*" In order to inspire us with this love St. John sets before us :—

I. The infinite charity of God towards us.

1. There was nothing in us to attract God's love, we had not even made the first advances : "*not as though we had loved God.*"
2. On the contrary sin had made our souls hateful with defilement : had all but blurred God's image in us out of all resemblance.
3. But so great was His love, "*because He hath first loved us,*" "*He sent His only-begotten Son into the world that we might live by Him.*" Love, divine and infinite, bears no restraint, makes light of sacri-

fice, and in sheer abandonment gives up to death, "*His Son to be a propitiation for our sins.*"

II. Our corresponding duty of charity towards our neighbour.

1. There can be no such gulf between ourselves and our neighbour as between God and us. If God loves us in spite of our vileness, surely we ought to love one another where we can see no vileness like to what God must behold in us.

2. More than that, just as "*God hath loved us,*" just as "*He hath given us of His Spirit,*" so also has He treated our neighbour. God has chosen his soul for His temple, God has given His only-begotten Son for him.

3. Hence the touchstone of our love for God is our love of our neighbour. "*If any man say, I love God and hateth his neighbour he is a liar.*" "*For he that loved not his brother whom he seeth, how can he love God whom he seeth not,*" for "*no man hath seen God at any time.*"

III. The fulfilment of this duty, a source of our greatest confidence.

1. It proves the *reality* of our Faith.

a. If we testify and confess "*that the Father had sent the Son to be the Saviour*

of the world ;" " if we know and have believed the charity which God hath to us," and yet do not imitate that Divine example, our faith is dead ; it is but as *" the sounding brass and tinkling cymbal,"* (I. Cor. xiii. 9) an inert, not a living faith.

b. So the loving fulfilment of God's will towards others shows that faith is not an emotion, but the guiding principle of our life."

2. It *" casteth out fear."*

a. Strong in the confidence such love gives *" we may have confidence in the day of judgment."* The charity of God is *perfected* within us, *" because as He is," " making His sun to rise on the good and the bad,"* (St. Matth., v. 45,) so *" we also are in the world."*

b. So no servile fear is found in our souls, for perfect charity is incompatible with such fear.

Thus does the reign of love, universal, clear and devoid of fear, bring down for those who practise it, the kingdom of God on this earth, for in heaven love reigns absolute ; all its happiness is love, all its brightness, its glory, its life is love, love endless, mighty, joyous, divine.

Second Sunday after Pentecost

LOVE THE MARK OF THE CHILDREN OF GOD

"We know that we have passed from death to life, because we love the brethren."—(I. John, iii. 14).

"*We are now the sons of God,*" says St. John at the beginning of this chapter, (v. 2.) that is why the world hates us. The world knew not the Eternal Son, received Him not, revolted from Him, and perpetuates its revolt with bitter rancour both against Him and those whom He has made His brethren. Of necessity then ought we on the contrary, love one another, for "*we know that we have passed from death to life, because we love the brethren:*" passing from dead works to serve the living God, with love to animate us in all we do.

Love is the life of the soul: where love does not exist the soul is spiritually dead. "*He that loveth not abideth in death.*"

I. Life is manifested in *action*: so—

1. Love should be *positive, active, beneficent* and *communicative,* not a mere sentiment or emotion. "*He that hath the sub-*

stance of this world, etc." God does not accept the proffered love of such a one as this.

2. Love must exclude all shadow of hatred, "*Whosoever hateth his brother is a murderer.*"

II. Love must be in its essence, supernatural, based on the supernatural motive of the infinite perfection and love of our blessed Lord, who, undeserving as we were, laid down His life for us. "*In this we have known the charity of God, because He hath laid down His life for us, and we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren.*"

1. No merit in affection, solely for mere lovableness.
2. The more unworthy our brethren, the greater merit in our love for them, the more does our love resemble the love of our Lord.

Practical lessons.—If a Christian would be found in the love of God let him examine:—(1) if he give of his substance to the poor, generously, steadily, not through caprice nor intermittently, secretly, humbly looking on himself merely as God's steward, not scornfully, as though the substance were his own, for such alms have but little value in the sight of God.

Every Christian ought most carefully to examine himself on this subject of almsgiving. It is God's great test of his fidelity: many have been lost at the end, through neglect of this duty. The uprightness of the motives that govern almsgiving should also be carefully scrutinised so that each one may be able truly to say that he loves God, not merely "*in word nor in tongue, but in deed and in truth.*"

Third Sunday after Pentecost

THE ROCK OF HUMILITY.

"Be ye therefore humbled under the mighty hand of God, that He may exalt you in the time of visitation."—(I. St. Pet. v. 6).

The stable foundation of all sanctity, the concrete that underlies the spiritual edifice in the soul is humility. Humility, when the basis of christian virtue and devotional life gives strength and security to all the rest of the spiritual structure, for "*the fruit of humility is the fear of the Lord, riches and glory and life.*" (Prov. xxii. 4). Where humility is not, apparent virtue, no matter how striking, must sooner or later fall before the untiring assaults of the evil one.

I. Humility is the proper attitude of the creature.

1. Humility shows us the might of the Creator, and thereby infuses into our souls, peace, contentment, and submission, along with a childlike trust in God. "*Casting all your care upon Him, for He hath care of you.*" (v. 7).
2. Humility sets before us the Power that ordains all things strongly yet sweetly:—the Wisdom that directs all things in ways

unlike our ways, in ways that surpass our feeble judgments, yet bringing about results that justify it. "*Wisdom is justified by her children.*" (St. Matth. xi. 19).

3. Humility too, holds up before our eyes our misery, our nakedness, our worthlessness. Our intellect limited; foiled in trying to solve even trifling problems:—our will stopped at every turn:—our passions exercising their dominion over us, a sway mortifying, even when with the grace of God we are able to withstand them.

Humility then is but *truth*: it shows us ourselves as we truly are. What then can be more reasonable than humility?

II. Humility is the source of all our strength.

1. Humility forewarns us, and so forearms us: it shows us our weakness, and makes us watch. "*Be sober and watch.*" Humility will make us be ready at every point, with our minds clear, our judgment steady, our nerves braced, our defences ever prepared. We must never relax. No one ever learnt this truth by bitter experience, better than St. Peter himself: it was his sleeping on that fatal night that caused him ere the cock crew to deny his Lord and Master.

2. Humility is an immense grace, settling us in entire dependence upon Almighty God, who therefore rules over us in His own unhindered way, and strengthens our feeble efforts with His mighty Hand, so that St. Peter can say, "*whom resist ye strong in faith.*"

a. Humility is a temper of soul that begets faith: the deeper our humility, the deeper our faith.

b. Faith is the shield that wards off the assaults of the devil. (Eph. vi. 17). It imparts confidence in God's protecting Arm, as steady as if that Arm were visible and its might felt, and so enables us to carry off the victory." "*This is the victory that overcometh the world, our faith.*" (I. John, v. 4.)

To poor human nature, this endless conflict is often disheartening: at times we are tempted to lower our arms and sue for peace: but peace is not to be found in betrayal; those who are in the world and of the world, having no hope of an eternal reward, nevertheless suffer too and are buffeted. But for us remains the promise, that after our time of trial, Christ Jesus will Himself perfect us, confirm, and establish us.

Fourth Sunday after Pentecost

UNTIL THE DAY DAWN

"For I reckon that the sufferings of this time are not worthy to be compared to the glory to come, that shall be revealed in us."—(Rom., viii. 18).

What cheering words! They come upon us like some penetrating balm, some bracing tonic, when our steps are faltering and our arms grow weary of the combat. There is something better, something higher, far more noble in store for us, than this poor miserable existence of ours with its few elusive, deceitful joys, but for the most part eaten up with miseries. The whole wide world has been disordered by sin, and we must bear our share of the penalty—but only for a time: soon the dawn will break over the hills, the day-star is on the point of appearing. In the coming glory of that new day, all things shall be perfected; our strength shall be renewed like the eagle's, then shall there be a new heaven and a new earth, and all creation having cast off "*the servitude of corruption,*" shall glory in the salvation of God, "the *revelation of the sons of God.*". This is the only explanation of the enigma of the world: look round and see if it is not so.

I. Look at the world round about us.

1. Is not every creature "*subject to vanity,*" to constant change, decay and death? But as with us, not freely, nor *willingly*: all these evils have come about through sin.

2. Creation bears this burden "*in hope,*" knowing that it is but for a term, at the end of which the better things having come, it "*shall be delivered from the servitude of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God.*"

So all creation is yearning, waiting for the day of deliverance, when nature shall be perfected and restored to more than its former glory; waiting anxiously for the restoration of all things, as the souls of the just in Limbo longed for the coming of their Redeemer to burst their prison bolts and bars.

II. Look too at ourselves.

1. If even the Apostles who had received "*the first fruits of the Spirit*" in such abundance, groaned within themselves at the sight of their miseries, saying, "who shall deliver me from this body of death",... what must it be with ourselves?

2. Life at the best is but a weary time of trial, encompassed on every side by miseries.

a. We groan and travail in pain along with all the rest of the material creation; death is always breaking the ties that bind us to one another, leaving us lonely and friendless to face the hardness and bitterness of a misjudging, censorious and critical world.

b. Spiritual sufferings too: possibility of hell, casting shadow over our lives—strength and vehemence of temptation—facility of sin—prayer and spiritual exercises a tedium—predominant passion waxing stronger and stronger, giving no rest—temptations to despair, to give up fighting and float along with the tide, "mei autem pene moti sunt pedes, pacem peccatorum videns." (Ps. lxxii. 2.)

But why lose heart? The goal is within sight—the prize, "*the glory to come that shall be revealed in us*," is worth all the sorrows of life a thousand times over. The day will soon break, and at the rising of the Sun of Justice, the chill mists of temptation shall melt away: then shall be made known the revelation of the sons of God, the redemption of this miserable body; "sown in corruption, it shall rise in incorruption, sown in dishonour it shall rise in glory, sown in weakness it shall rise in power, sown a natural body it shall rise a spiritual

body." (I. Cor. xv. 44). Surely this is worth living and striving for. Lift up your heads for your salvation is near at hand: our King cometh quickly, and His reward is with Him, a reward exceeding great. Lift up your eyes for help to the mountains and see: the day-star is appearing: 'tis He, "behold He cometh leaping upon the mountains, skipping over the hills." (Cant. ii. 8). "Strengthen ye the feeble hands and confirm the weak knees. Say to the faint-hearted: take courage and fear not; behold your God will bring the revenge of recompense: God Himself will come and save you" (Is. xxxv. 3) as He came to the prison-house of Limbo. "Attollite portas principes vestras," "Vexilla regis prodeunt": the pageant is coming: "the King of Glory shall enter in." (Ps. xxiii. 7). He has triumphed—we have but to follow in His wake. It is true we must suffer for a while, but gloomier far must have been the pilgrimage of the just who only had Limbo to look forward to, keener far our blessed Lady's sufferings, harder far the lot of the saints; but their sorrows and death are now swallowed up in victory. This is the lesson of hope St. Paul wishes us to learn: to keep before our minds the greatness of the joys that God has laid up for those that love and serve Him. Whatever graces, whatever consolations, whatever rays of hope, God gives us now,

are but faint images of the perfect flood of joy, that will inundate our souls when God makes them all His own in the full and entire adoption of the sons of God; in the day when "the redeemed of the Lord shall return, and shall come into Sion with praise, and everlasting joy shall be upon their heads: they shall obtain joy and gladness, and sorrow and mourning shall flee away." (Is. xxxv. 10).

Fifth Sunday after Pentecost

THE BLESSINGS OF UNITY

"Be ye all of one mind."—(I. Pet. iii. 8).

"How good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity." (Ps. cxxxii. 1). God is our Father and we are His family: just as in a home a good father desires perfect union amongst his children, so God desires perfect union of mind, heart and interests, in His family on earth. Hence it is that if there be any virtue more than another that befits creatures in their dealings with one another, it is the virtue of union and brotherly love. Our reason shows us that it is really so: human reason without any reference to revealed truth seems to see that the happiness of each one is dependent upon his being at peace with all his fellow-men, and the assertion is often made that the greater happiness of the greater number, is the best guarantee of the happiness of the individual. But St. Peter inspired by the Holy Ghost, also gives us supernatural reasons, setting forth the manifold blessings that God rains down on those "*who seek after peace.*"

I. "*For unto this are you called that you may inherit a blessing.*" (v. 9). Quoting the Psalms and Isaias, St. Peter makes use of the inspired

words of the Old Testament, to specify in what this blessing consists.

1. Good days. "*For he that will love life and see good days, let him refrain his tongue from evil, etc.*" A guard over the tongue like the fear of the Lord "shall delight the heart, and shall give joy and gladness, and length of days." (Ecclus. i. 12).
2. God will hear the prayers of those who practise peace.
3. No real hurt can befall them: even if they suffer, yet such suffering is in itself a most precious blessing. Saint Peter's allusion to the words of our Lord:—"blessed are they that suffer persecution for justice sake, etc." (St. Matth. v. 9).

II. Christians are to practise this virtue of unity and brotherly love especially in two ways:—

1. By watchfulness over their tongues: not rendering evil for evil—refraining their tongues from evil—their lips to speak no guile:
2. By seeking opportunities of helping their neighbour by kind actions:—"*decline from evil*" but "*do good.*"—"*Seek peace and pursue it.*" Kind actions are the means God makes use of to redress the balance in favour of good in this world.

This will create an atmosphere of peace and charity around us, which will enable us to sanctify the Lord Jesus in our hearts :—the settled unutterable peace of a heart firmly rooted in the love and fear of God :—" the peace that surpasseth all understanding." that gladdens our lives, and brings us near to God ; that makes us apostles spreading abroad the love of God in the hearts of men ; and even if we have to face affliction and persecutions like the Apostles, it is that same peace that will enable us to rejoice in that we are accounted worthy to suffer reproach for the Name of Jesus.

Sixth Sunday after Pentecost

DEAD TO SIN

"For we are buried together with Him by baptism unto death, . . . so we also may walk in newness of life."—(Rom. vi. 4).

The dominant note in all St. Paul's teaching, is the dignity of a Christian. Remember your dignity as Christians—is his constant cry. "I have said, you are gods, and all of you sons of the most High." (Ps. lxxxi. 6). Remember the great things God has done for you: remember with Whom you are incorporated. You are not your own, but Christ's and God's. You have no right to sin: you involve not only yourselves, but you defile the spotless purity and majesty of God Himself. In the natural order many a misdeed is left undone, because it is mean and shameful and unworthy of the dignity of a man. Oh, if Christians but realised this truth in the supernatural order, there would be far less sin.—Most sins are committed through thoughtlessness—sin seems but such a small thing in itself. The one thing that reveals its terrible and grotesque hideousness and loathsomeness, is the remembrance of the sacrilegious profanation of the Temple of God brought about by the commission of sin.

St. Paul in his Epistles, with clear and decisive proofs unfolds this truth as it bears on all the relations of man towards his Creator. More especially in this morning Epistle he proves that from the hour of our baptism, we ought to break entirely with sin, for "*we are buried together with Him by baptism unto death.*"

I. Baptism, a striking figure of our Lord's death and resurrection.

1. We go down into the water, as He went down into the grave.

2. The triple immersion, a figure of the three days in the tomb.

3. "*We are buried . . . . . unto death.*" We are first buried that we may die, and die for good to sin, just as Christ having died, death hath no more any dominion over Him.

4. After having thus died, and still continuing to be dead to a sinful life, we yet rise up from the water to an entirely new life, in union with the risen life of our Lord; "*that as Christ has risen from the dead by the glory of the Father, so we also may walk in newness of life.*" How spotless, how holy, ought to be the new life we lead in union with the risen life of our Lord!

II. This dying to the old life in baptism, is what incorporates us in the mystical Body of our Lord—it is just like the grafting of a branch on a tree.—

1. At first the branch appears dead, and as the winter comes on, the very tree on which it is grafted, seems to die too, along with the branch.

2. With spring comes the rush and flow of a new and far more vigorous life than the former one.

3. So St. Paul making use of this simile says: "*If we have been planted along with Him in the likeness of His death, we shall also be in the likeness of His resurrection.*" The branch having been cut free has died to the tree from which it has been cut, just as we having died to sin are justified from it. This cutting oneself adrift from evil habits is a veritable crucifixion, in union with the death of our Lord; but it is the only means of once for all escaping from the humiliating slavery and death of sin. But having once thus died, death no more hath any dominion over us, for we are all God's and in nothing our own;

living, we live to God, "*dead to sin, but alive unto God in Christ Jesus our Lord.*"

This is our dignity,—for this we were created, for this we were baptised. This is the lesson our baptism is ceaselessly preaching to us. May we never forget it.

Seventh Sunday after Pentecost

GOD'S REWARD

"For the wages of sin is death."—(Rom. vi. 23).

The lesson of the Epistle of to-day is the sequel of that of last Sunday. Then we were told we were not our own but God's; that having died by Baptism to our sins, and having risen to the new life of grace along with our Lord, we were no longer at liberty to sin—that sin disgraced the newly acquired dignity of human nature, and was incompatible with union with our Lord. But these are high thoughts, and possibly might not weigh with those who had but lately been servants of sin, so St. Paul prefacing his further arguments with the words, "*I speak a human thing, because of the infirmity of your flesh,*" puts to his converts the practical question—what good has sin ever done you? Was not the devil a hard taskmaster? Whom then will you serve, from even the low motive of self-interest?

I. You have had experience of sin.

1. The time was "*when you were the servants of sin,*" a time when you had nothing

to do with the service of God—when you "*yielded your members to serve uncleanness and iniquity.*"

2. But what benefit have you reaped from it all? As you look back on those days are you content? Rather are you not filled with confusion and shame on account of that very service of sin? Did sin make you better, stronger or happier? Was it not often on the contrary a source of misery —the beginning of death—"*for the end of them is death.*" Death was all you gained: "*the wages of sin is death.*"

II. Is not the service of God better than this?

1. Your service is a noble one, for it is the service of God Himself.

2. There is nothing to be ashamed of in such a service: nay, your fruit is unto sanctification—the fulness of God's grace has become almost the very tide of your life, bearing you on not to death, but to life everlasting.

How then shall you serve God? Much is not asked of you. Give but to God's service, now that you have engaged yourselves in it, the same zeal that you formerly showed in the service of sin, and God will reward you exceedingly.

You shall have the inward testimony of a good conscience, that peace of the soul worth all the world—the external testimony of good works—the glory of God augmented—your brethren edified—sufferings assuaged, wants supplied—the blessing of the widow and the orphan—the untold happiness of spending and being spent in the service of an ever loving God, waiting to bestow the eternal reward.

We cannot afford to lose a single motive to strengthen us in the service of God. We might prefer to act solely on high and disinterested motives, but St. Paul knew better: with the skill of a practised advocate, he will not lose a point in his anxiety to make sure of us and presses home each and every reason that may influence us for good. Let us join ourselves in spirit with David, and in all humility say:—"I have inclined my heart to do thy justifications for ever for the reward." (Ps. cxviii. 112).

Eighth Sunday after Pentecost

THE DIGNITY OF SONSHIP

"For the Spirit himself giveth testimony to our spirit, that we are the sons of God."—(Rom. viii. 16).

Once more St. Paul strives to impress upon Christians the immensity of their dignity, in order that they may be led to lead lives worthy of the vocation by which they are called. He has already shown how little the Old Law was able to do in the way of helping men to a higher and holier life: he now sets himself to depict in glowing terms all the strength and graces of the New Dispensation. Born again in Baptism to a new life, they are, by the grace of the Holy Spirit of Him who raised Jesus to life again, to lead a new spiritual life even though still weighed down by their mortal bodies.

I. In view of this, God has given them that greatest of dignities, the sonship of adoption, which consists in:—

1. The breaking down of the old servile fear: "*you have not received the spirit of bondage again in fear.*" He contrasts the high dignity of the Christian, with the lower

though privileged position of the Jewish people under the Old Law—as servants, like pupils under a pedagogue (Gal. iv. 5), but not sons—their guiding motive not filial love, but the penalties consequent on disobedience. The loving title, "sons of God" practically entirely confined to the New Testament.

2. The gift of filial love of God, "*whereby we cry, Abba* (*Father*)." How the Incarnation has, as it were changed the very attitude of God towards His creatures!
3. Being adopted sons, we have been raised almost to a level with our Lord—we have become His brethren, "*heirs indeed of God and joint heirs with Christ.*"

Could God have raised creatures to a higher dignity than this? This is the climax of St. Paul's appeal to the sense of the greatness of our dignity.

II. What then should be the life of a Catholic, who realises what great things God has done for him, raising him up from the dunghill of sin, the servitude of corruption, "that He may place him with princes, with the princes of His people." (Ps. cxii. 8.) By what signs can he make certain that he preserves this dignity unsullied?

1. They who obey the inspirations of the Spirit of God, "*they are the sons of God.*" (v. 14.) This is the great test of our being in God's grace, the readiness of our obedience to the voice of God pleading in our hearts.
2. The spirit of mortification—warring against the deeds of the flesh (v. 13). He who leads a mortified life, obeying the laws of the Church cheerfully, keeping a guard over his senses, refraining from all occasions of sin, shows thereby that he knows his dignity, and that he realises what his dignity requires of him. The old motto, "noblesse oblige."

Such should be the life of a true Christian: not a mere slavish attempt to keep the letter of the law, asking how far one can go without sin, but a generous and noble effort to live up to the grandeur of the dignity with which Almighty God, by a special act of love has ennobled us—choosing us out in Christ "before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and unspotted in his sight in charity. Who hath predestinated us into the adoption of children, through Jesus Christ unto Himself." (Eph. i. 4, 5).

Ninth Sunday after Pentecost

FEAR THE TRUEST WISDOM

"Wherefore he that thinketh himself to stand, let him take heed lest he fall."—(1 Cor. x. 12).

In the preceding verses, the Apostle has been detailing the great things that were done for the Israelites, and shows from what befel them, that we are not to presume upon whatever favours and graces God may have given us, but that we are to work out our salvation in fear and trembling, being careful to avoid sin in every shape and form.

I. He enumerates the various falls of the Israelites in the desert, as well as the severe punishments that followed on them, adding that the different occasions of sin they encountered, were meant to be a figure of the temptations that beset the life of a Christian.

1. *Covetousness.*—Discontent with the manna—yearning for the flesh-pots of Egypt. (Num. xi. 4). We who are fed with bread of angels, are not to covet the things of this world.
2. *Idolatry.*—"*Neither become ye idolaters,*" as the Israelites who at the very

time God was writing the Law, sat down to eat and drink, and rose up to dance around the golden calf. There may not be temptation to actual idolatry as in St. Paul's time, but men still figuratively worship the golden calf as assiduously as ever the Israelites did of old.

3. *Fornication.*—"*Neither let us commit fornication,*" alluding to the swift and stern punishment that fell upon the people, when they sinned with the daughters of Moab. (Num. xxv.)

4. *Tempting God.*—The people often tempted God, but St. Paul refers to Num. xxi.; when they lost faith in God's promise of a Messias, and so "tempted Christ"——healed by the brazen serpent, a figure of our Lord on the cross. St. Paul is possibly correcting the sin of want of faith in the resurrection of that body—"now if Christ be preached that He rose again from the dead, how is it that some of you say that there is no resurrection of the dead." (1. Cor. xv. 12.)

5. *Murmuring.*—Discontent with the divinely constituted government of the Church of God—the sin of Core, Dathan and Abiron,

who were swiftly swept away by the destroying angel. (Num. xvi.)

II. The lesson of all these terrible examples is :—*the greater God's blessings, the greater should be our cause for fear.* The Israelites who were so severely punished, were actually living under a special providence, and were daily witnesses of God's miracles. Their privileges however were but a figure of ours.

The Dead Sea—Baptism and the Precious Blood.

The Promised Land—Christ's Kingdom.

Moses their leader—we have our blessed Lord.

Guided by the cloud and pillar of fire—we by the Holy Ghost.

Fed with manna—we with the Holy Eucharist.

Given miraculous water to drink—we have drunk of the Saviour's fountains in the Sacraments.

All that happened to them was but a figure of our condition under the New Law ; but if our privileges are so much greater, greater far will be our punishment if we are unfaithful. The punishments inflicted upon the Israelites were temporal ; if we fail, our punishment will be

eternal. All the greater must be our reason for fear in that we are so highly privileged.

Let us then humbly pray that no temptation may take hold on us but such as is human; that as the peril of falling is so great, and the punishment so terrible, that God may so temper temptation that we may easily be able to overcome it. We dare not trust in ourselves, "*wherefore he that thinketh himself to stand, let him take heed lest he fall.*" If only we trust in God and work out our salvation in fear and distrust of our own strength, sedulously avoiding occasions of sin, we may be assured that God will do the rest, and "*will make with temptation issue, that we may be able to bear it,*" and that persevering till the end we shall at length safely enter in upon the promised land.

Tenth Sunday after Pentecost

THE GIFTS OF THE SPIRIT

"But in all these things one and the same Spirit worketh, dividing to everyone as He will."—(1. Cor. xii. 11).

The heathen world was sunk in superstition and devil-worship. Consulting the devil had been a constant practice with the Corinthian Christians before their conversion. Partly in order to counteract this practice, and also to show to the early Christian community that God was stronger than the evil one, the visible gifts of the Holy Ghost were shed abroad in great abundance. Lest there should be any confusion between these gifts and the false marvels of the evil one, St. Paul first gives a short rule for distinguishing them, and then goes on to explain that the wonderful gifts of God are given for the good of the whole Church, though individuals are made the channels of them.

1. There are the various *ministries*, the priestly, diaconal and episcopal offices instituted by the same Lord, to carry on the

divinely instituted sacramental life of His mystical Body the Church.

2. There are the *operations* of grace, attributed to God the Father, as the origin and fount of all power.

3. So also in like manner are the special *charismata,* the *manifestation* of the Holy Spirit given for the accomplishment of their special work at certain periods of the history of the Church ; such as the *word of wisdom, the working of miracles, prophecy,* etc. *" But all these things one and the same Spirit worketh, dividing to each one as He will,"* not for the sake of the individual, but for the general good of the whole Christian community.

Lessons. All are practically equal in the sight of God. Each one it is true has his own separate work to do, but what God chiefly looks to is the conscientiousness with which each one fulfils his task, doing it willingly and lovingly for the sake of God who gave it to him. God's reward will not be measured according to the office anyone has filled, but by the way, in which he has carried it out. How foolish then it is for us to be discontented comparing ourselves with others, and wishing we had other work to do. We may be quite cer-

tain that if we had our wish we should, after the novelty had worn off, find our new duties quite as tedious and distasteful as our present ones. Toil is the lot of all in this life : we cannot escape it do what we will—it is the cross God lays upon our shoulders—and only by bearing it manfully and uncomplainingly can we hope to gain the crown that God has laid up for those that love Him.

Eleventh Sunday after Pentecost

THE SAFEGUARDS OF FAITH

"I make known unto you the gospel, ... by which also you are saved."—(I. Cor. xv. 1).

I. The Apostle reminds his converts of his teaching regarding our Lord's death and resurrection. Other teachers had been at work since his departure from their midst, and some of the Corinthians had begun to doubt the resurrection of the body. In order to reanimate their faith, St. Paul restates in detail exactly in what the mystery consists :—that Christ died for our sins—that He was buried really and actually—that He rose again the third day.

1. They themselves ought to have learnt this from their knowledge of the Scriptures —the prophecies concerning our Lord. (Is. liii. 3 ; Osee vi. 7).
2. Moreover they had the testimonies of eye-witnesses :—St. Peter, and the eleven —the five hundred disciples, many still living—and lastly he himself, their teacher, in spite of his unworthiness, had also seen His Lord and Master in the glory of His risen life.

St. Paul would leave no room for mistake: with clearness and detail and minute description, he declares the death, burial and resurrection of Jesus; the mystery that is the foundation of our faith, the type of our spiritual resurrection, the source of our salvation.

II. In all ages of the Church unbelief shows itself, and at certain times as at the present it becomes rife and seems to threaten the very existence of faith itself: sometimes it seems to recede, but only to advance again in a fresh wave. There are two chief sources of failure of faith.

1. Want of humility—Where humility is not there is sure to be narrow-mindedness. A vain man is entirely taken up with himself and his own petty views and aims: he measures the things of God by his own puny standards: even in the natural order he cannot look at things as a whole, but his judgments are narrow and one-sided. Those who are clever without depth are especially liable to this failing, and unbelief is often assumed for the sake of being thought clever.
2. Want of purity of heart. This failing is a still more prolific cause of unbelief. The clean of heart see God, but the unclean have their vision clouded: they wish there

were no God nor mystery of faith, so that they might be able to go on in their sins with impunity; and the wish becomes father to the thought.

III. Safeguards against unbelief. When temptations against faith assail us we should:

1. Above all things strive to keep our consciences free from sin: we must be careful about the exact fulfilment of all our duties. There is always reason to suspect ourselves of unconscientiousness in some respect or other.

2. We must pray for light to God the Author and Finisher of our faith, saying "Lord increase my faith"—"I believe Lord, help my unbelief."

3. We must cultivate a horror of unbelief as something infinitely dishonouring to God, to His truth, His goodness, His love.

The crucifix to a loving heart is the answer of every difficulty, it unlocks every mystery, throws light ineffable upon every problem of life.

Twelfth Sunday after Pentecost

THE CHRISTIAN PRIESTHOOD

"How shall not the ministration of the Spirit be rather in glory?"—(II. Cor. iii. 8).

The Apostle in the preceding verses, tells the Corinthians that with them there is no need for him to bring credentials and commendations. They themselves are his epistle, their faith through him is his commendation. He declares that he has been a fit minister of the New Testament, but that the merit must be attributed to God. Humbly he acknowledges that of himself he is nothing, but that his sufficiency evidenced in their conversion is from God, Who has established His new covenant with men, making it the channel of his efficacious graces, and giving it a priesthood far surpassing the priesthood of Aaron. It was in virtue of this priesthood, that he could say that he was a true and fit minister of the New Covenant; of that New Testament given to men not in the letter but in the spirit, not written on the tables of the Law as was the Testament of Moses, but written on the tables of the heart by the Spirit of God.

I. He compares the ministry of the Old and New Law, setting forth the surpassing glory of the latter.

1. The ministration of the Old Law it is true was glorious, but it was nevertheless a ministration of death, for though it taught men what to do, it failed to give them those efficacious graces that alone could enable them to perform what was demanded of them—nay, it often was the occasion of sin to men, just as we often through sheer wilfulness are tempted, by the mere fact of a thing being forbidden.

2. Far more glorious must be the ministry of the New Law by which the charity of God is diffused in our hearts by the Holy Ghost, enabling us to accomplish the duties God lays upon us.

a. By it graces are given in abundance, holy virtues are infused, spiritual life is conferred on the soul.

b. It possesses the power to consecrate the sacred Body and Blood of Our Lord, the highest possible dignity that could be given to man.

c. The power to absolve, to sit in the judgment seat of the eternal Judge, hearing

causes of everlasting significance, pronouncing sentences that bind in heaven and on earth.

d. The power to bless, and confer blessings by so doing.

e. The power to command not merely men but evil spirits, and to be able to compel them to obey.

We should therefore at all times bless God for all the graces of the New Law, but more especially for giving us a priesthood endowed with such mighty powers for the sake of our salvation. We should reverence the priesthood, repose the greatest confidence in the priest whom God has set over us, seek to make his work easy, pray for him and always show him a ready obedience. We must avoid all criticisms, all fault-finding, all opposition, remembering that we are not his judge, nor his keeper, and that if we deserved a gentler rule, God would not deny us our deserts.

Thirteenth Sunday after Pentecost

THE PROMISE OF GOD

"To Abraham were the promises made and to his seed."—(Gal. iii. 16).

St. Paul has been rebuking his Galatian converts for attaching so much importance to the Old Law, and so little to the promise. His argument is as follows:—God gave His promise to Abraham that all the nations of the earth should be blessed in his Seed, namely our Lord. The Law which came into existence four hundred and thirty years later did not annul the promise. For as the Apostle argues, if the inheritance that is our eternal salvation were conveyed by the works of the Law, it would be apart from and distinct from the promise, to which *alone* the inheritance is attached. The Law was given on account of the weakness and sins of the Jews, to constrain them by penalties, and was to last only until the Seed should come. The promise was given by God to Abraham; the Law was ordained by Angels, with Moses who acted as mediator on behalf of the Jews, who were liable to fail in fulfilling the conditions, and thus the Law would be abro-

gated. The Law was not contrary to the promise: it could not confer justification: all justification either before or after the Law, is only to be obtained through the merits of our Lord to Whom the promise was made.

I. How wonderful is God's condescension in promising! There is a touchingness about it, showing the gentleness and fatherliness of His rule and a humanness in his dealings with His poor creatures.

1. The reliance that children place on their parents' promises, and how they are reminded over and over again by their little ones of the promise. This reliance rests on the honour as well as the truth they believe to be in their natural protectors.

2. We forget our promises sometimes, God never does. (Is. xlix. 15). We cannot perform them always: God can. Our honour is involved in our promises, but what is it to God's honour.

3. The awful indignity shown to God in not relying on His promises; impeaching as it were His honour, truth, goodness, love, power, etc.

God under the New Law has promised us His special blessing: that blessing consists in grace

and strength to carry out His holy will perfectly in every detail of our lives. The graces He gives us are not merely sufficient, but superabundant beyond all measure, so that it is our fault, and our fault only if we fail. Hence we should have a great confidence in Almighty God and His promises: we should pray most earnestly and with full confidence of being heard in all our difficulties, for has not God *promised* to hear our prayers: and full of confidence in the strength with which God endows us we should war vigorously against temptations and our predominant passions. How many there are that give up the struggle and fall away, simply because they have not sufficient confidence in God! Let us not be of their number.

Fourteenth Sunday after Pentecost

THE CHRISTIAN'S WARFARE

"And they that are Christ's have crucified their flesh."—(Gal. v. 24).

All through life the war goes on between our higher and our lower nature. There never can be any truce; the enmity is too essentially antagonistic to admit of even a temporary peace. We are made up of body and soul; the soul tends upwards, the body would drag us down to gross and animal pleasures. "Unhappy man that I am, who shall deliver me from the body of this death?" (Rom. vii. 24). Yet for all that heaven is a prize worth fighting for, through all the years of a man's life.

I. *Our helps.* We are not left to fight alone: in order to carry on the warfare successfully.

1. The Holy Spirit comes into our souls in *Baptism*—by Him the soul is clothed with habitual grace, the supernatural habits of the moral virtues are infused, so that as years pass they may take root and acquire strength in opposition to our evil inclinations.

2. The Holy Ghost again comes to us in greater plentitude in our *Confirmation*, for at that age the world and our passions are about to attack us in force—the fruits of His presence are the gifts of "*Charity, joy, peace, patience, benignity, goodness, longaminity, mildness, faith, modesty, continency, chastity.*" The seed that is sown in Baptism by the Holy Ghost, if left to grow under the direction of the same Holy Spirit, unhindered by sin, will increase from hour to hour into mature fulness, bearing those fair and noble fruits that make those in whom they are seen, pleasing to God.

II. *Our enemies.* These, St. Paul says are manifest: the snares spread for us by our evil inclinations incited by the evil one, are only too well known.

1. Self-indulgence: "*immodesty, luxury . . . drunkenness, revellings.*"
2. Disloyalty to God our Maker: "*idolatry, witchcrafts.*"
3. Hatred of our neighbour made in the image of God: "*enmities, contentions, emulations, wraths, quarrels, dissensions, sects, envy, murders.*"

The conflict can only be maintained by hard and severe strain, prolonged as long as life lasts. Self-denial has to be exercised daily : " he that taketh not up his cross and followeth me, is not worthy of me." (St. Matth. x. 38). Mortification of our senses must be steadily practised : our sight and hearing to be carefully watched : all vain, unworthy, irreligious, or improper conversations to be shunned: our taste, that so often leads to the growth of our lower animal nature, not to be gratified. Our crucifixion must also include the mortification of lawful desires so that the mind may be able to attain complete control. But above all we must root ourselves in complete dependence on God's grace : we may have a strong will, and a firm purpose, but without this humble trust in God's grace our natural powers will utterly fail to overcome the stress and persistence of temptation. Let our daily prayer be :—" Incline unto mine aid, O God ; O Lord, make haste to help me." (Ps. lxix. 2.)

Fifteenth Sunday after Pentecost

THE WORKS OF MERCY

"Therefore while we have time, let us work good to all men."—(Gal. vi. 10).

"*While we have time.*" What a solemn warning! "Lo the night cometh when no man can work" (St. John ix. 4.): our life is but a brief spell—a short trial upon which eternal interests depend.—For a little while longer we have "time"; time, which we must fill to the full with good works. St. Paul, in concluding his Epistle to the Galatians especially impresses upon them two of the works of mercy, one spiritual, the other corporal, viz.: the loving fulfilment of the duty of fraternal correction, and the duty of giving of our substance freely and joyfully.

I. The duty of fraternal correction is to be discharged in all humility and charity.

1. We should not blame the fall of a brother but rather excuse it, for he has been *overtaken* by the fault perhaps suddenly or in ignorance.

2. We should then in all meekness and with kindliness instruct, not upbraid him; very often this is all that is needed.

3. We should humble ourselves knowing our own weakness: fearing lest being puffed up, we fall into the same fault.

4. We should help him to bear his burden, just as our Lord took upon Himself our sorrows and suffered for our sins: helping our brother by our compassion, our instructions, our prayers and our penances.

We should above all be careful not to deceive ourselves by being under the impression that we are better than others: in the terrible day of God's judgment, each one will have "*to bear his own burden,*" to answer for himself alone: we shall not be judged as compared with others, but God will require from us the account of our own stewardship, the opportunities He has given us.

II. Generosity in giving, also a most important duty.

1. Just as the teachers of the Galatians had the duty of instructing and correcting those under their care, so also the flock for whom they gave up all else were bound to spontaneous and generous liberality.

2. The goods of this world are given in order that a right use may be made of them —God, who gives riches in order that good may be accomplished by those who possess them, will require a most strict account for them—if they be expended merely in pleasure, the possessor "*shall reap corruption,*" but if they be used in the way God wishes, the reward will be "*life everlasting.*"

"The time is short: it remaineth that . . . . they that buy be as though they possessed not, and they that use this world, as if they used it not" (I. Cor. vii. 29-31); making use of it but for the one purpose of working out their souls' salvation; seeking out opportunities of bearing one another's burdens, seeking "*to work good to all men, but especially to those who are of the household of the faith*"

Sixteenth Sunday after Pentecost

AN APOSTLE'S PRAYER FOR HIS PEOPLE

"That He would grant you . . . . to be strengthened by His Spirit."—(Eph. iii. 16).

St. Paul in bonds—from his Roman prison is writing to his beloved converts at Ephesus, bidding them not to lose heart at his sufferings. It is their glory as well as his, that he should be counted worthy to suffer for the Gospel. But fearing for the faith and perseverance of his flock, fearing too lest their faith was based too much on personal allegiance to himself, St. Paul turns their thoughts heavenwards, and on his knees, prays "*the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, of whom all paternity heaven and earth is named,*" that He may enable and strengthen them by the power of the Holy Spirit to realise the infinite nature of His paternal love that embracing the whole world made Him give up to death His only Son. It is this thought that will strengthen them in the Holy Spirit of God, and enable them to persevere through all the stress of trial and temptation.

The graces, St. Paul prays may be given to his flock, suggest a most practical lesson for us. We

too, are apt to base our faith on natural motives and authority: there is always a danger of these supports failing us and then our faith finds itself in a most perilous position. If we would guard against such a danger:—

I. We must pray God to give us strength and grace to realise by the help of His Holy Spirit, and by the indwelling of our blessed Lord by faith and grace in our hearts:

1. The immensity of God's goodness:— its *length* extending throughout all ages; its *depth*, which, in the person of Our Lord, sounded the lowest depths of suffering in order to rescue us from the lowest depths of hell; its *height* reaching up to the heaven, raising us up too, and making us sit together in the heavenly places. (Eph. ii. 6).

2. "*The charity of Christ which surpasseth all knowledge*": the love of our Lord, who took upon Himself our Redemption, accomplishing it with an abandonment and emptying of Himself far beyond anything man could have ever dared to hope or pray for; and to know this mystery of love so thoroughly that we may be able

to say with St. Paul, "I judged not myself to know anything . . but Jesus Christ and Him crucified." (I. Cor. ii. 2.)

Thus will our feeble efforts be strengthened by the strong might of God's grace, and realising the infinite goodness of God, "*Who is able to do all things more abundantly than we desire or understand,*" we shall never faint under tribulation, but continue to persevere and battle on, knowing that we are working with God, and God through us, and so giving Him "*glory in the Church, and in Christ Jesus, unto all generations, world without end. Amen.*"

Seventeenth Sunday after Pentecost

A CHRISTIAN'S VOCATION

"I . . . . beseech you that you walk worthy of the vocation in which you are called."—(Eph. iv. 1).

For the sake of his sufferings and the chains he bears for preaching the Gospel to them, St. Paul adjures his flock at Ephesus to remember their glorious vocation and to walk in a manner worthy of it. They are to remember the wonderful ways of God's providence by which they were all called together both Jews and Gentiles into the unity of the Church of God, to be brethren of our blessed Lord and members of His mystical body

I. He recalls to their minds the manifold reasons there are to encourage them to preserve the bond of unity amongst themselves.

1. They are members of the same mystical Body, animated by one and the same spirit, having the same end and the same hope.

2. They have one and the same Lord,

profess the same faith, and are united by the same Baptism, which makes them members one of another.

II. All these things are true of ourselves. We too have been called with the same glorious vocation; we are all members of one another in the unity of the faith: equally too should we be careful to practise the virtues that correspond with our vocation.

1. By practising the virtues of humility, mildness and patience, remembering our unworthiness, our sinfulness, our utter absence of anything to incline God to call us specially to himself.

2. By "*supporting one another,*" helping our neighbour to bear his burdens, mindful that as members of the same body we are bound to assist one another.

3. "*Careful to keep the unity of the spirit in the bond of peace.*" The practice of humility and fraternal charity will ensure this peace, the peace that the world cannot give, for worldliness means self-seeking and strife.

It is by the faithful practice of these lowly virtues that we shall attain the true dignity of

our vocation, walking worthy of the vocation in which we are called; declaring the virtues of Him "Who hath *called* us out of darkness into His marvellous light," (I. Pet. ii. 9); knowing "what the hope is of our *calling*, and what are the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints." (Eph. i. 18.)

Eighteenth Sunday after Pentecost

THANKSGIVING A DUTY

"I give thanks to my God always for you."—(I. Cor. i. 4).

There is hardly any duty we neglect more than thanksgiving. When we are in need of anything we are ready enough to pray for it, but when our prayer is answered we mostly tread in the footsteps of the nine lepers who were healed by our Lord, not in those of the Samaritan.

1. St. Paul's prayer, however, is a most wonderful example to us of the faithful discharge of the duty of thanksgiving.

   1. He prays thanking God not for himself, but for his people.

   2. With him thanksgiving is not the effect of a passing emotion as with us, but is the regular discharge of a *duty* that is always pressing; but nevertheless his prayer is heartfelt, deep and fervent.

   3. We generally thank God for some merely temporal favour: this shows what appeals to us most. Not so St. Paul: what is the

subject matter of his thanksgiving? He thanks God for:—

(a) The fervour with which the Corinthians embraced the faith, and for the further tidings that had come to him that their fervour had not diminished but had gone on increasing.

(b) That they were "rich in Jesus Christ," not that they were rich in the world's goods. Corinth was an exceedingly rich and prosperous city, yet the only thing that gave St. Paul cause for thanksgiving was that they were rich in grace and good works, in those treasures laid up where neither the rust nor moth consume, where thieves cannot break in and steal. (St. Matth. vi. 19).

(c) That they were rich too, in the gifts of the Holy Spirit, the gifts of spiritual understanding and of utterance by which the Gospel was confirmed in their midst.

(d) In fine that no grace needful was wanting to them, and that so they were ready for the coming and manifestation of our Lord Jesus Christ.

For all these blessings and the promise they contain, does St. Paul give thanks, praying that

our Lord may grant them the grace of final perseverance, that they may appear without sin, holy and just in the day of Christ's judgment on the world.

II. Thanksgiving then is absolutely necessary. St. Paul gives thanks always: so should we. The temper and attitude of our minds towards God should always be one of gratitude: the words, "Deo gratias," should always be ready to leap spontaneously from our hearts. In order to acquire the spirit of loving gratitude:

1. We should daily recall to mind God's blessings, making acts of special thanksgiving for them, being careful to attach more importance to spiritual than to temporal blessings.
2. We should thank God not merely for His goodness towards ourselves, but also in regard to others

As thanksgiving then is a *duty*, it ought to have its time and place in our rule of life: we ought to examine ourselves about our fulfilment of it when preparing for Confession: we ought to pray earnestly for the spirit of thanksgiving, especially during the Holy Mass that is pre-eminently the Eucharistic sacrifice, the sacrifice of thanksgiving.

Nineteenth Sunday after Pentecost

JUSTICE AND HOLINESS

"Put on the new man who . . . . . is created in justice and holiness."—(Eph. iv. 24).

We must walk in newness of life, in justice and holiness, and we must show forth that newness of life in tongue and heart and hand: the grace of God within us must show itself in word and thought and act: this is the Apostle's teaching. He begins with the tongue.

I. Speech is a wonderful gift—the tongue of man does wonders, exercising a power over the minds of its fellows that seems almost incredible, but for our being witnesses of its triumphs.

1. The *tongue* is given to us in order that we may speak truth, justice and judgment, and praise our Creator.

2 Lying, deceit, fraud, evil speech of any kind are sinful inasmuch as by them speech is diverted from its original purpose.

3. St Paul adds a further reason why we should speak the truth, viz., because

we are members one of another, in the mystical Body of our Lord—so if we speak unjustly or to the deceiving of a fellow member, it is as though we spoke against Jesus Christ Himself.

II. From the tongue St. Paul turns to the *heart* "*Be angry and sin not*" he says quoting the Psalms (Ps. iv. 5.): not that he bids us be angry, but that if a gust of anger comes upon us, we are to withstand its ill-regulated impulse and shake it off as soon as possible. "*Let not the sun go down upon your anger,*" an old Jewish proverb signifying that anger should be repressed as soon as possible.

1. We dare not trifle with the sin of anger, for it opens the door to hatred and some of the most dangerous temptations of the devil.

2. When we allow ourselves to dwell upon the cause of our wrath, other evil feelings soon take possession of us, ending in outward acts and perhaps violence of the worst kind.

3. The heart must then be guarded from harbouring even slight ill-will, for the devil knows how to work on such feelings,

so as to incite us to the most heinous crimes.

III. Next St. Paul dwells on our *actions*.

1 "*Justice and holiness*" must characterize all we do.—If we have done injustice in the past, we must now do it no more, but make restitution and exercise all care to avoid it in the future.

2. Our strength was given to us to labour, to carry on God's purposes by our work. Our energies are to be directed only in ways that are just and lawful,—part of our gains are *due* to the poor, more especially in the case of those who are blessed with abundance. What makes it so hard for a rich man to enter heaven is that if his heart be set on riches he is divided by passion and duty

Very often there may be within us natural habits of virtue that may help us to live up to the grace of God in thought, word and deed; but the new life to which we have risen must be wholly supernatural.—The natural failings must be rooted up entirely, and our natural good qualities fused with the supernatural. The natural

man must die to rise a supernatural man. The soul of all our good must be the grace of God, which will mould our lives so gently and so sweetly, yet withal so powerfully that they can be truly said to be led "in holiness and justice before Him all our days." (St. Luke i 75.)

Twentieth Sunday after Pentecost

REDEEMING THE TIME

"See therefore how you walk circumspectly, not as unwise but as wise."—(Eph. v. 15).

The Apostle, after reminding the Ephesians, that they are the children of light, (Eph. v. 8.) goes on to explain how they are to walk in the light with which Christ has enlightened them. The coming of Jesus Christ, the brightness of the Father's glory and the figure of His Substance, has flooded the world with light, a light that shone forth in the darkness around, enlightening every man that cometh into this world. There is then no excuse for them if they stumble

We also have a full share in the light which our Lord came down from heaven to communicate to us. Our understandings need never go astray, enlightened by the virtue of faith, guided by the infallible teachings of God's Church. Wisely humbly, discreetly then should we bear ourselves knowing that our eternal salvation depends upon our walking circumspectly.

I. Especially however the light that is within us, shows us the necessity of making a *good use of time: "redeeming the time because the days are evil";* the world flooded with wickedness, we ourselves encompassed on all sides by snares and dangers. Time, says St. Bernard, is as precious as heaven itself, for it is time alone that can procure it for us.

1. We are then to watch over every moment of our time, not wasting it as do the imprudent and thoughtless, but always trying to understand what God expects, and doing it with all our hearts.

2. Flying all those temptations and occasions of sin, that over and above their sinfulness, are occasions of such terrible waste of time, especially the vice of overindulgence in drink.

3. If we wish to receive consolation let us not make use of such unworthy means, but let us rather be filled with the Holy Spirit of God, the Author of the only true and lasting joy, who inflaming our hearts with the love of God, will make them the temples of His praise.

Soft and low and exceeding sweet our hearts

shall sing the mercies of God: "I will sing to the Lord as long as I live," (Ps. ciii. 33), said the Psalmist; "I will sing with the spirit, I will sing also with the understanding," (I. Cor. xiv. 15), "*giving thanks always for all things in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ to God and the Father.*

Thus do we rightly fulfil the end of our creation. For the joy of life, the birds sing in the trees, and all creation murmurs in breezes the joy that stirs it. But our end is higher: the joy of true life is ours, the life of grace, the prelude to the joys of eternity. That is why, in his heart of hearts, a true Christian ought to voice that joy in music sweeter than earthly sounds can give, for the strains are caught from heaven, and blend in the hymns of the choirs of angels whose fellow citizens we are made.

Twenty-first Sunday after Pentecost

THE WEAPONS OF OUR WARFARE

"Put you on the armour of God that you may be able to stand against the deceits of the devil."—(Eph. vi. 11).

Man's life is a warfare. In the hour of our Baptism we were enrolled in the army of God—and the one purpose of an army is to *fight*. The fight begins soon. With the awakening of the passions and the development of the mind the war begins—grim, terrible, deadly, unsparing. There is no escaping it. Peace is out of the question: even a truce, a momentary cessation from hostilities is not permitted. Inexorable, inevitable, the awful work goes on ever, from the cradle to the grave. Many fall—many run away—many throw down their arms in sheer despair, many in exhaustion. Some, after long years of heroic endeavour, at the last, fail, and all is lost. There is no escape: until death we must maintain the fight.

I. Two things therefore we need, the courage that dares and suffers and endures, and the arms wherewith to do battle.

1. Our courage is from God: "*be strengthened in the Lord and the might of His power.*" Daily then must we implore that courage, that strength of God that we may fight unflinchingly and conquer in Him who strengtheneth us.

2. Our foes are legion: malignant beyond all conception, crafty and unscrupulous, powerful and mighty; the rulers of the world of darkness, princes on heights of the vast universe of wickedness.

3. To oppose them we must be armed from head to foot.

   a. Girt round with truth, in sincerity and fidelity to God.

   b. With the breast-plate of justice and good works to cover our heart.

   c. Our feet shod with the preparation of the Gospel, ready, swift, prompt to obey and follow its call.

   d. With the shield of faith in our left hand, always before us to ward off the blows of the enemy, and more than that to extinguish even those fiery darts wherewith he assails us, the passion and lusts that he would inflame within us.

e. On our head the helmet of salvation, hope in Jesus Christ our great Captain; and the sword of the Spirit, the word of God, in our right hand.

This is our armour, the armour with which He Himself will arm us for the war.

Sad, desolating, destroying is the battle-field In sweat and blood and tears, through the weary years we must dare and persevere in daring, and endure till death at last releases us. Discouragement we fain must face, temptations to relax our efforts and drop our vigilance, weariness of soul and heart, but we must overcome them all. We have put our hand to the plough and there is no turning back. The warrior on the battle-field, when night comes down and brings a respite, sits by his camp-fire thinking of home and the loved ones there—of the welcome he knows will be his when his toils are over; so we must look upward and onward to our Father's home for the rest, the peace, the love, that will be ours after the labour and strife.

Twenty-second Sunday after Pentecost

A GENEROUS FLOCK AND A GRATEFUL PASTOR

"We are confident of this very thing, that He who hath begun a good work in you will perfect it unto the day of Christ Jesus."—(Phil. i. 6).

There is nothing that begets confidence more then generosity. It is a test of earnestness. Where generosity is found, one may feel sure that piety and devotion are not as is sometimes the case, merely emotional, but securely established and based on charity. This is especially the case in a parish: generosity is a bond between priest and people, a mutual bond of tender affection and reciprocal kindness. In those countries where the priest is not sustained by the offerings of the people, but salaried by the state or even supported by the ancient revenues of the Church, we find far less of binding affection between pastor and flock, than where a faithful people esteem it their privilege to be the support and mainstay of the Church of God in their midst.

St. Paul writes to the Philippians to thank them for their remembrance of him in prison and in bonds, a remembrance manifested by the generous gifts they had sent him. "But I have all and abound: I am filled, having received from Epaphroditus the things you sent, an odour of sweetness, an acceptable sacrifice pleasing to God." (Phil. iv. 18). There was no stint, no niggardliness, no grudging in their gift. "You have done well in communicating to my tribulation . . . no church communicated with me . . . but you only," (Phil. iv, 14, 15), and from the beginning you have steadily adhered to it. The neglect of the other churches is thus recorded against them for ever.

I. The Apostle then goes on to declare his confidence in the Philippians on account of this very thing, declaring that God, who had inspired the good work, will make it perfect when the day of reckoning arrives. It is right that he should have this confidence,

1. Because they, by their support of him, are really partakers of his sufferings, his merits, and his labours in setting forth and spreading the truths of the Gospel.

2. Because being filled with gratitude and

tender affection, he calls God to witness how dear they are to him; but not looking on this as sufficient he invokes the love of the Sacred Heart of his Lord and Master to supply what is needful. Hence he prays:—

a. That their charity may more and more abound, and with it the understanding to give in measure and season to such as are in need. "Blessed is the man that understandeth concerning the needy and poor." (Ps. xl. 2).

b. That they may go on discerning more and more what is pleasing to God, that they may be sincere and actuated by a pure intention, that they may persevere without fault till the end, that they may abound in the fruits of justice, in all christian virtues; thus to continue giving glory to God through Jesus Christ.

Let Catholics then learn from St. Paul's glowing eulogy to be generous in all that concerns the service of God and the work of God's Church: let them remember that whatever they give will be "*an odour of sweetness, an acceptable sacrifice pleasing to God,*" a source of endless spiritual blessings; for as St. Paul points out, it is not the gift he seeks, but the fruit that may abound to

their account from the gift. Remembering then what immense blessings will redound to them for all they do for God or His Church, Catholics cannot but feel impelled to do all that lies within their power to have their share in the fruits of St. Paul's prayer that God may supply all their wants according to His riches in glory in Christ Jesus, that they may be "*filled with the fruit of justice, through Jesus Christ unto the glory and praise of God.*"

Twenty-third Sunday after Pentecost

OF THE EARTH EARTHLY OF HEAVEN HEAVENLY

"For many walk . . . . enemies of the Cross of Christ . . . . who mind earthly things. But our conversation is in heaven."—(Phil. iii. 19, 20).

Since the time a man of Macedon had called him in a vision to come over and help them, St. Paul had taken the Phillippians to his heart, and the union between them, cemented by mutual good offices, had continued till the end. So in perfect confidence he asks them to take him for their model. For there are many, he says, and the thought draws tears from his eyes, who walk in such manner that they are enemies of the Cross of Christ, attributing their justice to the Law alone, to the exclusion of the graces that flow from the Passion and death of our Lord, or else living for the indulgence of their vices and so making that Passion a mockery and its graces ineffectual. Nay more, being lost to all sentiment of shame they glory in their wickedness. Such as these are *of the earth, earthly*: they live for earth; they scheme and plan night and day to secure the good things of earth, wealth, position, comfort, luxuries, as if

earth were to go on for ever. Little wonder, their end is destruction. But that such as this should happen to his flock, is more than the Apostle can contemplate without tears.

I. Far be it from us brethren to fall into such evil ways. Let the Kingdom of God be first and before all else in our thoughts, for are we not the fellow citizens of the Saints, members of the household of God. One day we shall see them our elder brethren, not merely with the eyes of the soul but with the eyes of our glorified bodies—one day these eyes of ours shall gaze upon the King in His beauty. "I shall rise out of the earth . . and in my flesh I shall see my God." (Job. xix. 25, 26).

1. Our thoughts ought then be raised continually to heaven—our hearts ought to centre where our treasure is—our voices ought to ascend in union with the glorious company of the heavenly citizens.

2. We ought to pray too that we may realise the peace and union of the heavenly citizens in order that we may reproduce it here below in our lives on this earth, so that charity and concord may be as of old the distinguishing marks of the followers of the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

3. But above all let us pray that we may be steadfast and persevere till the end: it is perseverance alone that crowns our lives with success, for he that persevereth unto the end, he alone shall be saved.

Then when earth is over and the fever of life is done, when the petty wants that fret us, the paltry pleasures that tempt us, the miserable aspirations and ambitions of the world that have such a hold on us, have at last melted away, then shall we be in very truth the joy and the crown of those who have laboured and striven and prayed that our names might be written in the book of life.

Twenty-fourth Sunday after Pentecost

(3rd after the Epiphany, Cf., p. 17)

Twenty-fifth Sunday after Pentecost

(4th after Epiphany.)

LOVE THE FULFILLING OF THE LAW

"For he that loveth his neighbour hath fulfilled the Law."
—(Rom. xiii. 8).

We often ask ourselves if we are doing all that God requires of us. We look into our lives and see perhaps little sin in them: we dwell too, upon our virtues and good works, but nevertheless there sometimes crops up the haunting question—Am I doing enough? Am I doing what God requires?—Am I doing it in the way God wishes? It is the old query—"Master, what must I do to possess eternal life?" (St. Luke x. 25).

I. St. Paul gives us the ready solution: real love of our neighbour is practically the fulfilment of the law. Not that the mere performance of acts of kindness is actually the entire fulfilment of the whole of God's law, but St. Paul, writing

to those who have already professed the faith, and who are striving to live up to its dictates, wishes to impress upon them,

1. That the readiest way to test the *reality* of their service of God is to look into their lives and examine whether their faith bears fruit in the shape of works of charity.
2. That the surest way to attain true and disinterested love of God is to spend and be spent in the service of their neighbour for God's sake.
3. That God often, as in the case of Cornelius the Centurion, seems moved to give the grace of faith itself to those who having it not, yet corresponding with grace, show charity towards their fellow men.

II. But not content with merely laying down the principle, St. Paul, as did our Lord in a similar case, also applies it in detail.

1. He first enumerates the greater and more heinous crimes against our neighbour that disfigure human nature, such as adultery, murder, stealing, false witness, and covetousness that is at the root of so many sins.
2. Then he adds, "" *if there be any other Commandment, it is comprised in this word :*

'Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself.' " He who practises this love of his neighbour for God's sake will receive such abundant graces, that his life will be all but sinless. " *The love of our neighbour worketh no evil.*"

This is no new teaching. We may have failed to realise it so that the lesson comes home to us almost as a shock, but our state of mind is due to our careless habits of want of real thought rather than to any want of clearness in God's teachings. Over and over again the lesson is impressed upon us both by our Lord in the holy Gospels, and also in the writings of the Apostles. Our Lord's reply to the Doctor of the law was the same as St. Paul's: the description of the last Judgment given by our Lord is made to seem to turn entirely on our performance or neglect of the works of mercy. St. John too, the beloved disciple, writing out of the abundance of his knowledge of our Lord's Sacred Heart, is almost startling in the vehemence with which he lays down this same truth. " Whosoever is not just, is not of God, nor *he that loveth not his brother.*" (I. John iii. 10). " We know that we have passed from *death to life, because we love the brethren.*" (I John iii. 14). " My little children," he continues,

" let us not love in word nor in tongue but in deed and in truth. *In this we know that we are of the truth.*" He who loves thus, continues the Apostle, need have no fear ; his own heart tells him that he is doing God's will, and fills him with confidence. Even in this life he is filled with all good things. " Whatsoever we shall ask we shall receive of Him, because we keep His commandments and do those things that are pleasing in His sight. And this is His commandment, that we should believe in the name of His Son Jesus Christ, and *love one another,* as He hath given commandment unto us." (I. John iii. 22, 23). " *Love therefore is the fulfilling of the law.*" (Rom. xiii. 10).

Twenty-sixth Sunday after Pentecost

(Fifth Sunday after the Epiphany.)

CHARITY THE BOND OF PERFECTION

"But above all things have charity, which is the bond of perfection."—(Coloss. iii. 14).

St. Paul, writing to the Colossians whom he has never seen nor preached to, after warning them against the errors that already were beginning to be disseminated in the field of God's Church, sets before them the grandeur of the mystery by which they passed from death to life by means of the saving waters of holy Baptism. Then showing them what their new dignity is, he impresses upon them first the necessity of mortification as the only effectual means of thoroughly putting off the old man, their body of sin and their former bad habits. Next he gives them short and practical instructions as to the best way to commence building up their spiritual life. The Epistle being very short, he wastes no words, but goes straight to the point and dwells principally upon essentials. We thus have in the Epistle read in the holy Mass to-day a large portion of an epitome of ascetical theology drawn up by St.

Paul himself under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit of God. Let us then see in what it consists.

1. As we have already seen, he insists first upon the absolute need of mortification to root out past bad habits, and to weaken our natural inclination to sin.

2. Then as far as lies in our power, having purified our minds and hearts, we are to begin to put on the new man, modelling ourselves on God, whose image we are, advancing day by day in the greater knowledge, love and more perfect imitation of the perfections of God our Maker.

3. Next, as we are told in the opening sentences of this morning's Epistle being "*the elect of God*," we are to be filled with the spirit of forbearance, "*the bowels of mercy*," one towards another, bearing with one another's failings, forgiving the unavoidable trials that are so often inflicted on us by even good people; remembering that God has forgiven us far more than we can ever have to endure at the hands of our neighbour.

4. To crown all, we are to strive to practise the virtue of true charity, the crown of all virtues, "*the bond of perfection*," that

gives order and strength, supernatural beauty and perseverance to the merely natural virtues. This, as he insinuates, cannot be attained at a bound without effort, but is the crown of long and faithful attempts to practise the virtues of mercy, forbearance, humility and patience. Thus will our hearts be filled with the peace that God alone can give, the calm and settled tranquillity of a mind that is set on God alone, of a mind on which earthly interests have no hold. Then there is true peace, within the soul, and the soul being at peace, spreads around it an atmosphere of peace, for strife cannot enter where self-seeking exists not.

Oh, brethren, would that it were given to us to follow out the path St. Paul has traced so plainly for us. Let us ask ourselves how far we have advanced as yet. Have we ever begun? Have we begun to put off the old man? Are we mortified; are we humble, patient, forgiving? Mind, these are only the first steps. We cannot hope to attain the higher stages of charity and peace without long and assiduous practice of the fundamental virtues. If we think otherwise we belong to the already large number of those who

think they have almost arrived at sanctity, whereas they have not even begun to practise ordinary virtue. The path may seem hard and toilsome, but the reward, even in this life, is exceeding great. "*The peace of Christ*" will "*rejoice in our hearts*"; we shall be filled with never failing joy and thankfulness. Our joy will break forth in psalms and hymns and spiritual canticles, singing in grace in our hearts to God. We shall then advance by leaps and bounds in the service and love of God, so that all we do, whether in word or work, nay even our very living and breathing, will be done for God and in God, "*in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, giving thanks to God and the Father through Jesus Christ our Lord.*"

Twenty-seventh Sunday after Pentecost

(Sixth Sunday after the Epiphany)

FERVENT CONVERTS

"So that you were made a pattern to all that believe in Macedonia and in Achaia."—(I. Thess. i. 7).

Although his converts in Macedonia had been enduring a severe persecution ever since his departure, yet St. Paul in his letter to them writes in a strain of joy and triumph. They are he tells them in the course of his Epistle, his glory and his joy. (I. Thess. ii., 20.) They had embraced the faith so readily, adhered to it so steadfastly, and fulfilled its duties so perfectly that they had become a pattern to all the neighbouring churches. But not content with expressing his joy, St. Paul goes on to enumerate for their encouragement the virtues he observed in them, so that taking heart they might be led to persevere in the practice of what they had begun so well, and thus merit the crown of perseverance.

It may interest us then to recall to our minds the signs St. Paul thought so encouraging in his model converts.

I. *The work of their faith.* Their faith had not

consisted merely in professions; they had had to suffer for the truth, and they were still persevering under persecution. This after all is a sure sign of the solidity of our faith.—Let us ask ourselves.—Are we ready to suffer for our faith? Are we ready to forego worldly advantages rather than give up anything that is essential to our service of God? If our heart misgives us on these points, what sincerity can there be in our professions? We are ready enough to believe in and serve God while all goes well, but waver at the thought of making the least sacrifice for His sake. Such a faith is not worthy of the name of faith.

II. *That their charity was shown in labouring for others.* Again we have St. Paul applying the same test to the charity of his converts. Was it a charity that would bear wear? Professions are nothing, but to show charity in deed and truth is a real labour. Do we ever advert to our duties of charity to one another? Oftentimes our neglect is due only to want of thought. But now that we have adverted to our duty are we ready to live up to it?—Are we ready to make sacrifices to help our brethren? Are we ready to give good example? Do we try to recall them to the right path if we have any influence over them? Such duties may be distasteful, but if we do our best to fulfil them, we shall have the comfort of knowing that our

charity is a real charity, and that we too share in the praise and encouragement St. Paul lavishes on those whose conversion is a reality.

III. That their hope which enabled them to do so much was a bright and living force in their lives, based on their personal love and trust in our Lord Himself. This it was that had given them heart, and had sustained them through all their tribulation. We often make acts of faith, and try to practise works of charity, but we should also remember that the virtue of hope is the complement of the other two virtues, and that without hope they of themselves are imperfect. It is hope that buoys up our minds with the thought of what our faith tells us—that raises our minds and hearts to heavenly things, to Jesus the author and finisher of our faith. Let us not forget to strengthen our hope by meditation and special petitions for this most important virtue.

IV. *Knowing too their election.* This was the crowning motive of St. Paul's joy. He is harping once more on his old theme of the immensity of God's love in calling the Gentiles into His wonderful light, and that His having done so was a certain indication of the intensity of His yearning for their eternal salvation, a yearning that wrought signs and wonders, that shed abroad miraculous gifts of the Holy Ghost, that would leave no stone

unturned short of compelling their wills. But it also seems that St. Paul full of the faith and love and hope of the Thessalonians sees in their fidelity a sure indication of their final election by God, and in this hope he rejoices exceedingly.

St. Paul's encomium is but a repetition of the old lesson of the catechism that our service of God consists but in the practice of the virtues of faith, hope and charity. If on looking into our lives we find these virtues are a real living force in them let us take heart and continue to persevere; we are on the right road, then shall we become a pattern to those who are without; our fidelity will become the most powerful factor in the spread of the truth, for from us the word of the Lord will be spread abroad; into every place our faith which is towards God will go forth.

Twenty-eighth Sunday (24th) after Pentecost

STRIVING AFTER THE BETTER THINGS

"We cease not to pray for you that you may be filled with the knowledge of his will."—(Col. i. 9).

We have all of us heard of the sneer of the French infidel at Lourdes.—"It is earth that these people pray for, not Heaven"; and have we too not felt that notwithstanding the evil spirit in which it was said there was nevertheless somewhat of truth in the remark.

There are many who pray for the good things of earth, health, prosperity, success in undertakings that have only a temporary object in view, and although all these ends are lawful, yet we must remember that the principal aim of prayer ought to be the supernatural grace of God, and the prize eternal life.

The Apostle of the Gentiles in his prison cell in Rome, moved in spirit amongst his children whom in many lands he had drawn out of darkness into the light. There were many too he reckoned his children, though he had never seen nor preached to them except through his disciples.

The Colossians were amongst these latter, and on hearing from Epaphras a glowing account of their conversation, their faith and sincerity, full of a father's love, St. Paul writes to welcome his new-found children, assuring them of his abiding love and constant prayer. "*We cease not to pray for you.*"

I. What were the graces St. Paul asked for as day by day he laid his petitions at the foot of his Lord and Master?

1. That they might "*be filled with the knowledge of His will.*"
2. That in all wise apprehension and clear spiritual understanding they might follow out that will in their daily lives, living and acting worthy of those who are the sons of God.
3. That this knowledge might go on increasing day by day, and that step by step with that increase their correspondence might also become more perfect, growing in patience and cheerfulness under long suffering.
4. That their gratitude might be more fervent, ever giving thanks to God for bestowing on them the heritage which we see now in the light of faith, but after-

wards we shall enjoy in the light of glory; —for delivering them from the power of darkness through Him in Whose most Precious Blood they had redemption and the forgiveness of their sins.

For all these graces and blessings the Apostle prays. To faith like his, prayer for mere earthly things would be but loss of time—living in the light of eternity, he saw how small are the interests of earth, how transient the things of time. He knew what prayer was: its immensity, its glorious power that almost compels the will of God. He would not use such a power to obtain mere earthly benefits. Men do not put the tremendous force of a steam hammer to trivial uses; so to St. Paul, the great and momentous graces that influence our eternal salvation seemed alone the fitting end of prayer.

We may, it is true, pray for earthly things, so indulgent is God with us, but our prayer should be first of all for spiritual blessings—to know God's holy will, to have the strength to do it, to always have before our eyes our glorious dignity of being the sons of God, and so to be preserved from doing anything dishonourable to that holy state—to please God in every word and thought and act—to be rooted more and more firmly in

virtue—to be very grateful whether things go well or ill with us.

Pray for these things and God will readily grant them; pray we may for earthly things, but God cannot always grant them for they might be to our hurt, or our selfishness is an obstacle to our obtaining what we wish for: but if we pray for grace or the acquirement of virtue, if we have but good will, God cannot but grant our prayers.

First Sunday of Advent

THE DAWN OF THE SUN OF JUSTICE

"The night is passed, the day is at hand."—(Rom. xiii. 12).

Indifference to the salvation of the soul is the commonest feature of the life of to-day. It is not so much downright deliberate sin that makes us despair of the world, but the dead weight of carelessness and indifference all around us. There are numbers of Catholics, who, though not leading bad lives, are almost entirely indifferent to religion, and seem to be in no way moved at the risk of losing their immortal souls. There is hardly anything more painful to contemplate or so fertile in injury to the good of souls as this wretched spirit that has settled down upon us.

Even our Lord said of such a case, "because thou art lukewarm, and neither hot nor cold, I will begin to vomit thee out of My mouth." (Apoc. iii. 16).

I. It is to this class of Christians St. Paul's words especially apply, but they apply also to good people.

1. The very best, the most attentive and regular are apt, at times, to slumber a little.

2. It is hard to be ever on the watch, to be always keeping up the strain.

3. The devil too, is ingenious enough to find arguments to lull us with a feeling of security, whereas we can never feel secure till the prize is in our hands.

II. We must then awake—Advent is now calling us to renew our vigilance, to throw more lively faith into our prayers, more strictness into our mortifications, and greater fulness into our good works. Now is the "*hour for us to arise from sleep*," to be up and doing; the hour of salvation is nearer than we imagine; it is coming upon us, and more suddenly than we could have expected, it is upon us.

1. Let us then cast off the works of darkness; wordliness with its stupefying effect on our souls, deadening the soul to eternal things, indifference, carelessness, negligence.

2. We have slept through the night but now is breaking the dawn of a fresh day wherein to begin to work out our soul's salvation.

The light of God's day is upon our souls, the grace of God is with us, all we need is genuine

good will, strong, hearty purpose of amendment and the work will be done.

III. The Apostle speaks to sinners as well; "Arise from your sins." It is not too late to begin and finish the work that is appointed for you.

1. Put away the impurities in which formerly you have indulged.

2. Put away from you those sensual pleasures that have enslaved you; luxuries adding fuel to your passions.

3. Put away envies and contentions, works of darkness hidden and secret from the light of day and the eyes of men.

All lust, gluttony and ambition must be met at this beginning of Advent with firm and fixed resolve; with fasting and mortification to subdue the flesh; with alms-deeds, generous, systematic and secret, to do battle with self and love of good living; with humility and lowly service of others, that craving to be above others. Prayer, fasting and alms-deeds, the three eminent good works are especially the works of this season. The true Christian is one whose soul is animated by the grace and spirit of Jesus; strong with His virtues, His chastity, His humility, His patience, so that it may be said in very truth that in him Christ is made manifest and lives again.

Second Sunday of Advent

PARTY SPIRIT

"Now the God of patience and comfort grant you to be of one mind, one towards another according to Christ Jesus."—(Rom. xv. 5).

Party spirit amongst Catholics seems incredible, yet it exists and what is more is not uncommon. The injury it does to souls, the loss it occasions to the glory of God, all the miseries that flow from it, are not sufficient to prevent even good people from entertaining it. Organisation, co-operation and mutual sympathy are held back, the taint of the world is upon all good works, cheerfulness and effort are dispelled by it. We see it in national prejudices ; in suspiciousness with regard to converts and impatience on the part of converts at the want of enthusiasm amongst Catholics ; in the spirit of locality, in the want of union in parishes, owing to envy and wounded vanity, and in endless other ways working its evil influence in our midst.

I. The same spirit showed itself early enough in the history of the church. St. Paul reasons with it in to-day's epistle. The Jewish converts looked down on the Gentiles as new-comers and

nferiors; the Gentiles envied the Jews the possession of their many privileges. St. Paul therefore ells them to learn from Holy Scripture.

1. Patience in bearing evil fortune.

2. That consolation always follows on no matter what evil may befall us.

3. To hope for eternal blessings when justice shall be done to all.

4. That as Christ has received them both to the honour that God has granted alike to all of them, so let them render to each other that same honour.

II. St. Paul then proceeds to point out more detail, how Our Lord has united both Jew and entile.

1. Our Lord, the minister of the circumcision, in order to confirm the promises made of old to the Patriarchs came first of all to the lost sheep of the house of Israel.

2. But none the less was it true and most apparent from the Scriptures that the Gentiles were,

(a) to glorify God along with God's former chosen people; (Ps. xvii. 50: cxvi. 1.)

(b) and that the Messias from the root

of Jesse was to rule and be the hope of the Gentiles too. (Isai. xi. 10.)

III. As then Our Lord came to reunite into one family, mankind scattered by the sin of Babel, so that there should no longer be any distinction of Jew or Gentile, Greek or barbarian, bond or free, so he naturally expects us to practise virtues befitting children of a common Father.

1. Never to seek praise for our own works, while on the other hand full of sympathy for others, we pray earnestly that they may succeed.

2. To have a horror of the vulgarity of human respect, and a great distrust of worldly aids to religion.

3. Measureless confidence in God and unfailing cheerfulness.

It is by the practice of such unworldly virtues as these, we show that St. Paul's prayer has not been in vain:—that the God of hope might fill us with the joy of hope, the concord of faith, so that we may have the gladness and vigour that hope bestows, and so go on increasing in the fortitude of the Spirit of God.

Third Sunday of Advent

PREPARING FOR OUR LORD'S COMING

"The Lord is nigh."—(Phil. iv. 5).

The coming of Our Lord is at hand, and it is fitting that we should rejoice at the birth of our Deliverer. But St. Paul in his Epistle to the Philippians alludes to yet another coming, namely that other coming at which we are bidden to lift up our heads and rejoice, the coming of our Lord in glory to judge all things.

1. "*The Lord is nigh,*" he says, coming to reward your fidelity. Lose not patience in your tribulations, but rather *rejoice.*
2. "*The Lord is nigh*" to give to every one according to his works: rejoice not then in earthly pleasures, but "*rejoice in the Lord always.*"
3. "*The Lord is nigh,*" let your moderation, your meekness, "*your modesty be known to all men.*"

   (a) Let it appear in all your actions, your words, your deeds:

   (b) in your patience in suffering, the pa-

tience of those who await an eternal reward;

(c) in your detachment from things of earth, being "*in nothing solicitous,*" for all things will soon have an end. Why then be anxious and fearful about temporal things?

This is what the thought of the coming of our Lord teaches us. That coming is always at hand and so is always a stimulus to our drooping energies. This is why He Himself always has kept the knowledge of that hour from us; why His Apostles always spoke of it as *at hand,* so that having it continually before our eyes we should disentangle ourselves from earthly cares, and be ever prepared for it.

Detached from things of earth our minds will raise themselves naturally to God, asking for the better things with prayer and supplication and thanksgiving; and in answer to our prayers the peace of God shall descend from heaven flooding our hearts with a peace and a joy not of this world, bringing down heaven on this earth, keeping and guarding our "*hearts and minds in Christ Jesus.*"

Fourth Sunday of Advent

AMBASSADORS FOR CHRIST

"Let a man so account of us as of the ministers of Christ, and the dispensers of the mysteries of God."—(I. Cor. iv. 1).

With St. Paul our blessed Lord was all in all; the Church was His very mystical Body; the Sacraments were His mysteries; he and his fellow workers were Christ's ministers, deriving all their power, their worth, the sacredness of their persons and calling from Him, and from Him alone.

Christians then as Christians now, had fallen into the error of regarding the person of man; they had attached themselves to one or other of the Apostolic teachers of the Gospel, attracted either by their presence, their eloquence, or their natural gift of sympathy; raw converts, carried away by their feelings, they had actually ranged themselves into parties, some professing to be followers of Apollo, others of Cephas, others of Paul, and others of Christ! Moved by merely natural motives, and influenced by *natural* gifts, and but little impressed by the awful and mysterious dignity of their teachers as "*ministers of*

Christ and the dispensers of the mysteries of God," in one word, *other Christs,* they had with equal heedlessness cast down the idols they had set up so lightly, and when the whim seized them, opposed and criticised their teachers, with as little awe as they had previously worshipped them.

I. How sweepingly, how emphatically does St. Paul denounce this growing evil, an evil that sprang into existence almost as soon as the Church itself, to mar and vitiate its work till the end! How clearly he sets before them the office of God's priest in their midst, defining their duties and their attitude towards him.

1. He is simply *the minister of Christ,* the *other Christ,* speaking, acting, working in the person of Christ, his words, his work deriving efficacy, not from natural gifts, but from his office, and from the intensity of his union with and fidelity to the Person of his Lord and Master.

2. *The dispenser of the mysteries of God.* The Corinthians well knew what these words meant; the sacred and awful mysteries that above all else, conferred on the priest his sacred character, lifting him up above all men and angels, merging him as it were in the very personality of Christ.

This is his glory, this and not natural gifts should be the motive of their honour.

3. That they should not dare to judge him, for he that judgeth him is the Lord.

(a) It is not for inferiors to sit in judgment on superiors.

(b) They had had no experience of the priestly office; they knew practically nothing of a priest's duties, his difficulties, his lights, the depths of his experience; being in ignorance of all this, they could never fully appreciate the motives on which he often has to act "until the Lord come, Who will both bring to light the hidden things of darkness, and make manifest the counsels of hearts."

The greatest grace God has ever given to his people is the fulness of power of the ministry of the New Covenant, that awful gift of divine co-operation, whereby the priest of God is set up in the midst of God's people, bearing in his consecrated hands the fulness of his Master's power. But woe unto the people that looking upon him, fail to see Christ in him; who, forgetful of their loyalty to their Redeemer, give honour to the mere

man, not to the power of Christ indwelling in him, the character of Christ imprinted on his soul, for by that fact they are beginning to lose their part in the Kingdom of Christ and God. "Let no man therefore glory in men. . . for you are Christ's, and Christ is God's." (I. Cor. iii. 21, 23).

L.D.S.

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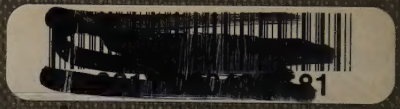
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